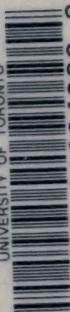


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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# SORROWS OF WERTER

GOETHE

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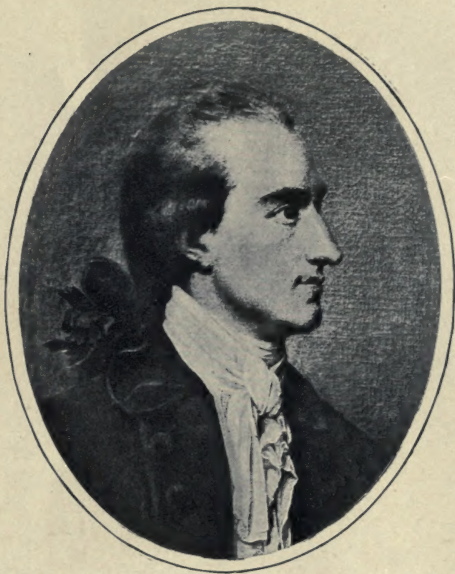
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GOETHE.

*From the Painting by May.*

A.S.P. Hoodhouse.

# THE SORROWS OF WERTER (1774)

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

GOETHE

1822 - 1894

With an Introduction by  
HENRY MORLEY

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*A. H. Hootman*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE was born at Frankfort-on-the-Main on the 28th of August, 1749. Goethe's father, the son of a poor tailor who had married twice and acquired some property, was a dry and formal man, who had become an imperial councillor, and steadily increased in wealth. He was thirty-nine years old at the time of the poet's birth. But Goethe's mother, then eighteen years old, was a busy, cheerful woman, with the nature of an artist, and she became the comrade of her son. "I and my Wolfgang," she said, "have always held fast to each other, because we were both young together." There were five other children, of whom only one survived the years of childhood. That was Goethe's sister, Cornelia, sixteen months younger than himself. Of the other four, the longest-lived did not attain the age of seven. That was a little brother, Hermann Jacob, third child of the family, who died when Goethe was in his tenth year. Goethe shed no tears, because he believed his brother to be in heaven. When he was asked whether he did not love his brother, since he was not seen to lament his loss, he dragged from under a bed a heap of papers,

and said, "I had written all these that I might teach them to him." The French were at that time in Frankfort; the lieutenant of the King of France was quartered on the Goethes, but young Goethe had made Frederick the Great his hero. The boy wrote, studied, was familiar in the studios of artists, and in the Jews' quarter learnt mysteries of arts in which the Jews excelled. Before he was fifteen he was deeply in love with a girl older than himself, who only saw in him a loving child. He was, in the main, home bred, with good teaching and ample range for the development of native power, before he went, at the age of sixteen, to learn law in the University of Leipsic.

At Leipsic Goethe, who was singularly handsome, studied and idled, dreamed, had his ideal raised, and burnt his boyish poems; fell in love again, had his love returned, became fantastic, teased the damsel with distrust, lost her, and turned his experiences into verse—*Die Laune des Verliebten*. Like others in his day, he took a dark view of the world, planned gloomy plays, and wrote one, *Die Mitschuldigen* (The Companions in Guilt). He studied art and made a secret trip to Dresden to see pictures. He learnt to engrave. He had been seized with hæmorrhage when he went home again from Leipsic to Frankfort in September, 1768, the year before the publication, at Leipsic, of twenty songs of his which had been set to music by a Leipsic bookseller. At home there were months of illness; there was conflict with a dissatisfied father, against whom he found his sister Cornelia rebelling;

there was sentimental correspondence and erratic study; his best help coming from the trustful mother by his side.

In April, 1770, Goethe went to Strasburg, where he was to graduate as Doctor of Laws. There he came into sentimental complication with the two daughters of his French dancing-master; read the life of Goetz von Berlichingen; tried studies of natural science, and made the acquaintance of Herder, five years older than himself. From Herder's calmer spirit he learnt much. Goethe afterwards ascribed great influence upon his artistic life to Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, first published in 1766, with which Herder first made him acquainted. Then he fell in love with Frederika, daughter, aged sixteen, of a country pastor at Sesenheim, sixteen miles from Strasburg. To him this was all empty emotion, common in those days throughout France and Germany, and spreading into England as a distemper that killed nobody until it blended with brute forces of the Revolution that sent victims with exultation to the guillotine, and wept with empty sympathy over the hero of a chance reprieve. Goethe caught also an enthusiasm for Shakespeare, and began his play *Goetz von Berlichingen*.

In August, 1771, he had graduated as Doctor of Law and went home to begin practical training in law, but began rather to write literature in a literary journal of his town, the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*. In 1772 he finished *Goetz von Berlichingen*, a play that has for its hero one of the old predatory

chiefs who issued from their castles upon whom they would, defied the emperor, and knew no law but their own will. Authority was then fast falling into contempt. In literature the spirit of Nationality was being strongly opposed to formal Classicism, and *Goetz*, as a play, followed rather the free spirit of Shakespeare than the unities which the French critics upheld. In the days of tumultuous thought, when the absolute savage was supposed by many to be a truer man than the best modern courtier, *Goetz*, as a hero, was drawn from an old national life, and glorified a savage independence. The play is alive with all the eager spirit of youth, and abounds with vigorous hits at the conventions of its time.

In the same year, 1772, Goethe went to get experience in the practice of the law at Wetzlar. He followed his one bent freely, and there "fell in love" with another girl of sixteen, Charlotte Ruff, who kept house for her father and the younger children, since her mother was dead, and who had been betrothed two years before to Kastner, the Secretary to the Hanoverian Legation. This is the beloved who was sentimentalised into the Charlotte of Werter. The original Charlotte was as true to her own ties as the Charlotte of the story; and Goethe broke away, in September, 1772, from the fascination, with much real emotion and high undetermined purpose for the future.

He went home and worked at law, re-wrote part of his *Goetz*, wrote in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten An-*

zeigen, and published *Goetz von Berlichingen* in the summer of 1773. The play had immediate success, and Goethe then began the *Sorrows of Werter*. This was at the time when Charlotte married. When it was finished, in September, 1774, Goethe sent a copy of this tale to Charlotte Kastner, née Ruff, with a tender note, saying, "I wish each to read it alone—thou alone—Kastner alone—and each to write me a little word about it. Lotte, adieu Lotte!" Again there was the tumult of the time, impatience of all formal authority, wild outbreak of the emotional life so long repressed, and an expression of it so complete and genuine that the publication of *Werter*, in October, 1774, made Goethe widely famous. There was what Carlyle called "vehement acceptance" of the book. "That nameless unrest," he says, "the blind struggle of a soul in bondage, that high and longing discontent which was agitating every bosom, had driven Goethe almost to despair. All felt it; he alone could give it voice. And here lies the secret of his popularity; in his deep susceptible heart he felt a thousand times more keenly what every one was feeling; with the creative gift which belonged to him as a poet, he bodied it forth into visible shape, gave it a local habitation and a name; and so made himself the spokesman of his generation. *Werter* is but the cry of that dim, rooted pain under which all thoughtful men of a certain age were languishing; it paints the misery, it passionately utters the complaint; and heart and voice all over Europe loudly and at once respond to it." Kastner's

true prophecy of the author of a book which deeply vexed him was, "when his great fire has somewhat burnt itself out we shall all have the greatest joy in him." Out of the tumults of a youth sensitive to every impression from the world without, came the repose of the great artist; the calm of a mind that has reached, through battle, to the crowning peace.

H. M.

## THE TRANSLATOR TO THE READER

1802.

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FEW are unacquainted with the history of Werter : the celebrity which attended its first publication naturally excited the curiosity of distant readers, and consequently produced several translations of it, both in England and France. In England, Werter has appeared in a variety of dresses, but the clothing seldom corresponded with the original. This may be easily accounted for—it was translated from the French, by some who were unacquainted with the German language ; and having lost a considerable portion of its spirit by the first change, we may naturally conclude that it entirely evaporated in the second. Others have literally translated it from the original ; but in this close adherence we find more puerility than simplicity, more folly than pathos ! Of the former translators, it must be observed that, though English scholars, yet from their ignorance of the German language, and being consequently obliged to refer to another *translation* of the work, they have in many parts perverted the meaning, and given Werter a dress

that is not his *own* ; and of the latter, their being unacquainted with the English idiom has rendered them incapable of conveying the original meaning to the English reader—this half-dress makes our hero appear more the subject of mirth than of pity.

From these preliminary remarks the present translation may be thought to come from the pen of one who is well acquainted with both languages ; but, in truth, it is the production of *Two* persons. Frederick Gotzberg is a native of Germany, had some knowledge of Werter's family, and ranks foremost among the *literati* of his country. How far this admired German history has been rendered an affecting English tale must be left to the decision of a candid and impartial public.

# THE SORROWS OF WERTER.

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## LETTER I.

*May 4, 1770.*

I REJOICE at our separation—yet I own it was surprising how I could bear to leave the man who was the dear companion of my youth, and is still my second self—the man whose disposition and qualifications so correspond with my own; alas! the human heart is unaccountable—it seeks repose where there is none. I am sure you will forgive me. Fate seems to have destined all the other connections, which I had formed as the basis of happiness, the very sources of affliction! Poor Leonora! But sure I am innocent of the tender passion that took possession of her yielding heart, when I avowed my admiration of her sister's charms; and yet—'tis doubtful if indeed I am innocent. Might I not have increased her flame when I evinced my superlative delight in all the little expressions of her affection? Oh, man, how industrious thou art to torment thyself with imaginary evils! But fear not, my friend! I

will endeavour to overcome this moroseness, and instead of taking a retrospect of past sufferings, and repining at those griefs which are incident to life, will consign them all to oblivion, and enjoy the present moment! 'Tis my friend's advice, and it is just—for mankind in general render themselves doubly wretched by the painful recollection of the wretched scenes they have endured.

You may tell my mother that I will pay every due attention to her business, of which she shall be soon informed. My aunt, with whom I have conversed, is far from being that unreasonable woman she has been reported. Her passions are strong, but her heart is good. Respecting my mother's estate, which has been so long withheld from her, she has sufficiently exculpated herself, and, on certain conditions which she has named, is willing to give up—even more than was desired. Assure my mother that I am certain this affair will be settled to her satisfaction. From this trifling circumstance, my friend, I am convinced that misunderstanding and inattention create more uneasiness in the world than deception or artifice, or at least that their consequences are more universal.

My situation here is truly agreeable. In this terrestrial paradise I find that healing balm of troubled minds, sweet solitude, which has ever been the joy of the wretched! The delightful spring

|| expands my heart, and invigorates my frame. All nature rejoices in every tree—in every field—the air is filled with fragrance—the feathered songsters hail the morning, and in the evening Philomel tunes a requiem to the retiring day. How different the town and country. In this city there are no charms for me, but in its environs there are the greatest beauties, those of Nature! On one of the hills which add to these rural scenes is the simply elegant garden of the late Marquis of Mobley, which, at first sight, must convince us that native taste has superseded professional skill, and that not a mere gardener, but a man of feeling, has been the chief cultivator. To the memory of its departed owner I have shed some tears on a tomb in an arbour, now almost in ruins, and lately deserted. This formerly was his favourite retreat, as now it is mine; and soon, I trust, I shall be his successor, having already procured the favour of the gardener, whose services I shall still be careful to retain.

Life contrasted with Action.  
Revery on wonders of  
nature Ch. Rousseau  
16 THE SORROWS OF WERTER.  
(Branel n. 313)

## LETTER II.

May 10.

How great is the tranquillity of my mind, now calm and serene as the morning spring, which renders this solitude so sweet! Here alone, in a country formed for hearts like mine, I now begin to live; so many delightful relaxations this solitude affords, that life seems at present a greater pleasure than action; for I neglect my studies, and renounce all my former amusements. I have laid aside the pencil, yet am still a better painter than ever! While the mist bespangles the branches of my vale with watery gems; while defended by surrounding trees from the mid-day sun, a few of whose penetrating rays serve as a glimmer in my favourite sanctuary, I sometimes take a pensive walk beneath the shady arches; then, extending myself on the high grass, near the border of the murmuring brook, I admire the great varieties of Nature—the thousand little plants—the thousand little insects which inhabit them—these, once beneath my notice, now rivet my attention—now convince me of that divine power which has created us, and whose eternal providence supports us! When darkness closes the scene, I call to mind all I have beheld—the wonders of the universe—and the impressions, like

the picture of a favourite mistress, fills me with secret joy that frequently breaks forth in pious ejaculation. Oh, my friend ! I would that expression was adequate to my conception, that I could indite all that I feel, but in vain ; words cannot reach such awful ideas, their sublimity overpowers and astonishes !

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## LETTER III.

*May 12.*

EITHER some invisible power of enchantment or the influence of lively sensibility renders every surrounding spot as heavenly as Elysium. Some irresistible charm attaches me here to a spring of clear water, which gushes from the rock, in a cave at the bottom of a hill, descending about twenty steps. The rustic wall which forms the enclosure, the lofty pines which overshadow it, the refreshing breeze, the murmuring of the water, the tuneful notes of the sweet tenants of the branches—all—all combine to inspire the mind with the most sublime sensations. Every day I pass an hour in this enchanting place. Here come the young maidens from the town to draw water ; innocent and useful occupation ! in which even kings' daughters formerly took delight. My imagination now forms all the manners of

remote times. Methinks I witness our ancestors under the supposed influence of good spirits concluding treaties and making alliances by the fountain side. Methinks I see the poor pilgrim, overcome with the summer's heat, here resting on the bank, or bathing and refreshing himself in the crystal stream. Sure, my friend, that man has never enjoyed the cooling beverage of a spring, after a long summer's walk, whose feelings and thoughts are not congenial with mine.

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## LETTER IV.

*May 13.*

SEND me books! No, my dear friend. I sincerely thank you for your kind intention, but earnestly request you to decline it. I have been so long guided, agitated, inflamed, that I am now desirous to be free, and enjoy my own ideas. I only wish for soothing strains, and these I have in Homer. Oft have I endeavoured to calm my raging blood, to check the violent passions of my heart; but need I inform my friend of these emotions? You know you have witnessed many sudden transitions; you have seen me now pensively sad, then mad with joy, now softly dejected, then turbulently

agitated. This heart is like an indisposed infant, which I must indulge, but let it not be known; the world would censure this weakness, and reproach the man who could sacrifice reason to his passions.

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## LETTER V.

May 15.

THE common people here, particularly the little children, already know and love me; yet when I first began to talk to them, they doubted my sincerity, and behaved rather rudely. I was not, however, too proud to court their favour, and soon verified an observation I had often made, that characters of high rank are too apt to keep their inferiors at a distance, as if their approaches could possibly diminish their dignity. But what arrogance—what *ignorance* does that NOBLE gentleman evince, who can condescend at times to be affable with a commoner, and at other times neglect and despise him! This life will not admit of equality—but surely that man who thinks he derives consequence and respect from keeping others at a distance, is as base-minded as the coward, who shuns the enemy for fear of an attack.

One day that I visited the fountain, I perceived

a young woman on the lowest step, with her pail beside her, anxiously waiting for the assistance of one of her companions to place it on her head. Immediately I accosted her: "Give me leave, my dear, to help it on." She blushed, and modestly replied, "Oh, no, sir;" but I waived all ceremony, and helped her to lift the pail; she thanked me with a smile, and I was amply rewarded with the pleasure I received.

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## LETTER VI.

*May 17.*

I HAVE already formed a numerous acquaintance, but am still destitute of society. I know not why the inhabitants of the place are so attached to me, but they are ever anxious to join me in my walks, and I feel regret when I am obliged to part with them. You ask what sort of people they are? I answer, such as you may find everywhere. Nature's work is always the same, but fortune makes the difference. The major part of mankind is obliged to devote the greatest portion of their lives to labour, and that for a scanty subsistence, while the remainder of their time seems so irksome that they are industrious to get rid of it; such is the fate of mortals! I am, however, much pleased

with my new acquaintance. What? though the proud may say I *forget myself*, I can assure them that I *enjoy myself* when seated at the cheerful table, where both hospitality and good humour preside; when a walk, a dance, or some other amusement may be proposed, that happily accords with my disposition. True, I am sometimes obliged to conceal myself, lest conscious of their inferiority they may be shy of me. This indeed is a check upon my pleasure; then the remembrance of my departed friend occurs, the friend of my youth, whom I have only known but to bewail; ah! painful recollection, she is gone! gone before me to the grave, and now the world is to me a wilderness—but, no more of this. . . . . A few days ago I met with the accomplished Mr. B——, a young man with a pleasing countenance. He has just left the university of Upsala, but makes no empty parade of his learning, though he must be conscious of his superiority to many with whom he associates. His application, however, appears to have been greater than his genius. He paid me a visit when informed of my knowledge of Greek and taste for drawing, which are reckoned prodigies in this country; and during conversation displayed his whole stock of learning, and the authors whom he had studied; he said he had read all the first part of Saltzer's Theory, and had in his possession a

manuscript of Heynes on the Study of Antiquities ; his company was entertaining. I have also become acquainted with another worthy character, who is steward to the prince, and whose generous disposition and noble spirit entitle him to universal esteem. He has nine children, and, I am told, it is a delightful scene to behold him when surrounded with his family. The eldest daughter is highly spoken of. He has given me an invitation to his house, and I shall certainly take the first opportunity of paying my personal respects. He lives about the distance of a league and a half, in a hunting lodge, which the prince gave him on the death of his beloved wife, as his former residence was on that account too melancholy for him. I have also met with some ridiculous characters, as disgusting as the others are agreeable ; they have forced themselves into my company, have rendered themselves absolutely rude by over-politeness, and absurd by unsolicited professions.

## LETTER VII.

May 22.

THIS life, they say, is a dream, and I am apt to think so too, when I contemplate the narrow limits which confine the active spirit of man; when I consider that all his powers are exercised for mere sustenance, in order to prolong a wretched existence; that his seeming concern with respect to certain inquiries is but a blind resignation, and that his great delight is to paint upon the walls of his prison delusive figures and false landscapes, though the boundaries of his confinement are still before his eyes—when these thoughts arise, Oh, my friend! I am silenced, I begin to meditate deeper, to search the heart, and what is the result? More visionary shadows, more vain superstition and empty imagination, than conviction, reality, and truth. All seems confusion, yet the current which hurries others through this stream of folly drives me along, and I also add to the number of dreaming fools. The learned agree, that children act without motive; but that the *great* children, as when *little* ones, wander through life, equally ignorant of both their origin and distinction, and without any plausible rules for their conduct, except the hope of reward or dread of punishment (or guided like them by a

No  
delusion  
in  
life

cake or a rod), is a position the learned cannot agree to, though, in my opinion, a palpable truth. I anticipate what my friend will say in reply, and am ready to acknowledge, that they are indeed the most happy who, like children, never think of to-morrow, but amuse themselves for the present moment with playthings and feasts, cry for what they want, and when that is given by indulgent mamma, cry for more. Happy beings, whom trifles can content; and some indeed are to be envied, whose gratifications are fully answered by the possession of paltry dignities and empty titles! who think themselves *gods* among men, the LORDS of the universe! That man, however, who, conscious of his own nothingness, perceives the folly of all this, with true dignity of mind remarks, that both the rich, who are proudly endeavouring to make this world their *heaven*, and the poor who, humbly toiling through life, for the sake of living, are equally anxious for a longer view of that scene, under whose influence they are so unequally supported. He may be at peace, he may be happy, in the title of a *man*, he knows his sphere is limited, but his mind is deeply impressed with the consolatory idea of liberty, which assures him, that when confinement is insupportable, he has a key in his possession that can open his prison door.

## LETTER VIII.

May 26.

x **I** You know my attachment to particular places, my partiality for solitary retreats, and the delight I take in arranging those scenes, and rendering them agreeable to my humour. I have found a cot here, which agrees exactly with my wishes ; it is about a league's distance from the city, in the district of Walheim, situate upon the side of a delightful hill, which commands a view of the whole adjacent country ; here is likewise a good old landlady, an original character, to supply me with wine, beer, coffee, and tea—but what most delights me here are two lime-trees before the church, which overshadow, with their extending branches, the little lawn that is delightfully surrounded with several rural habitations. You cannot conceive a situation more sequestered and pleasant—I send to the good old lady for a table and chair, and here in sweet seclusion take my coffee and read Homer. Accident led me to this place, hitherto deserted, during an afternoon's ramble. It was a fine day—the peasants were abroad at their labour, and only a little boy, about four years of age, was sitting on the ground nursing a child about six months old ; he clasped

the infant to his breast, and then with his little arms made a seat for it, and though his sparkling black eyes strayed about the green he still retained his position, unwilling to disturb his little charge. So delighted with this scene of innocence and affection, I seated myself upon an opposite plough, and with the most exquisite satisfaction sketched with my pencil this interesting picture of fraternal tenderness. I added the casual situation of an adjacent hedge, a barn-door, and some irregular implements of husbandry, and found, in the course of an hour, that I had produced a drawing of infinite expression and consummate design, without calling any invention to my assistance. This confirmed my former resolution of adhering to nature, for though simple, she is inexhaustible. She can always furnish the painter and poet with new subjects, and enhance the value of their productions. The arguments for rules are as weak as those which are urged in favour of the laws of society. An artist, guided by method, will, I grant, never produce anything very bad or disgusting, no more than the man who, under the restriction of the law and the regulation of education, can act offensive to the community or to his neighbour; but let men say what they will in defence of rules, they tend to destroy and cramp the true features and genuine expressions of nature.

But you will tell me, perhaps, that they prune the exuberant branches, and prevent deformities; I must still insist that they are restraints to genius, and that the loss of those beauties which they destroy is by no means a compensation for the errors they correct. Compare genius with love; let us, my friend, suppose that a youth, sincerely attached to a young lady, devotes to her every thought, pays her every attention, exerts every effort, uses every resource to convince her that she is the sole object of his affection; then comes a philosopher, perhaps one of high repute, and gives his advice: "My young friend, love is a passion springs from nature, but must be kept within due bounds. The best part of your time should be employed in the pursuits of life, and only your leisure hours be devoted to your mistress. Let your presents be according to your income, and those also at stated periods." Should the youth be capable of taking this prudent advice, his understanding may meet with general approbation, but his love is a mere shadow. Thus is the painter circumscribed by rules: he may be correct, but he can never be animated. Genius is a torrent, whose impetuous waves would burst forth, to the astonishment of all, but that some *artful* men, who have taken possession of the shores, by their counteracting influence prevent their course.

Here they have erected buildings and planted gardens, but, awed by the superiority of others, they are obliged to defend their methodical work with trenches and dams, and shut out merit to save themselves from ruin !

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## LETTER IX.

*May 27.*

SEDUCED by the fantastic humour I was in for metaphors and declamation, I totally forgot in my last to finish the narrative I intended to give you. Full two hours I sat upon the plough, seized with those picturesque ideas with which my letter abounded. A young woman with a basket on her arm came towards evening to look after the children, who were still in the same situation. "Philip," she cried out, from some distance, "you are a good boy." Having then perceived me, I advanced towards her, and inquired if these sweet children were hers ? she answered in the affirmative. She then rewarded the elder with a cake, and taking the younger up in her arms kissed it with true maternal affection. "Sir," said she, "I entrusted this little one to Philip's care while I went to town with my other son to purchase some

bread, sugar, and this earthen pot, to make soup for the young child's supper, for my eldest rogue broke the pipkin yesterday as he was quarrelling with Philip about some pudding that was in it."

I then inquired where the other son was, and while she was informing me that he was driving home a few geese across the meadow, he appeared, skipping along, and bringing his brother a hazel switch. During our conversation, I understood that she was the schoolmaster's daughter, of the village, and that her husband, on the death of his uncle, was gone to Holland to recover an estate; "for," added she, "his letters on the subject were never answered, and apprehensive of some foul play he thought his presence necessary, and I have not heard from him since his departure." I

was sorry to leave this good woman, and gave her a creutzer to buy a cake for the little one, and to the boys I gave another; we then parted. Indeed, my friend, there is nothing that can calm the ruffled mind so much as the sight of such a happy mortal, who, in the contracted circle of her existence, moves with a sweet serenity, and regardless of the past and future, is wholly intent upon the present; each revolving day passes without any emotion, and the falling leaves impress her with no other idea than that of the approaching winter.

I have since frequently visited the same place,

and am now quite familiar with the children. When drinking my coffee they have a piece of sugar, and at night I give them a share of my whey and bread and butter. Every Sunday I present them a creutzer, and should I be engaged at prayers the landlady has my orders to pay it. I have already engaged their confidence—they communicate to me all their secrets and wants, and charm me with their innocence, particularly when their little playfellows are with them. At first their mother was fearful they intruded, but I assured her to the contrary, and with some difficulty prevailed on her to give them their way, and let them enjoy themselves.

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## LETTER X.

*May 30.*

My former sentiments on painting may be equally applied to poetry: the chief requisites are a knowledge of the beautiful, and a proper mode of expression. This day has produced a scene which would make an admirable subject for an eclogue. But why poetical descriptions and pastorals? Must every wonder of nature be told in verse or measure?

Should you from this introduction expect something very sublime, you will find yourself disappointed: these lively sensations have only been occasioned by a rustic. As is my custom, I shall delineate it imperfectly; notwithstanding, as is my friend's custom, you will say that the picture is over-coloured—that it is all a romance of Walheim! It was agreed upon by a party of that village to come and drink coffee under the lime-trees. Not approving of the company, I apologised for my absence. The plough, which lately employed my pencil, having been damaged, a youth, who belonged to the neighbourhood, was busy in repairing it. Pleased with his manners, I entered into conversation with him, and in a short time won his confidence. On inquiring about his circumstances, he said that his mistress, of whom he spoke very highly, was a widow. His service I easily perceived was no *slavery*. He intimated that she was advanced in years, and having been unkindly treated by her husband, was determined never to marry again. During his narrative, there were so many fond expressions which evinced his hopes—his wishes to make her amends for the matrimonial unhappiness she had experienced—that a detail would be absolutely necessary, in order to convey a just picture of his affection; but I must be inspired with poetic fire indeed to paint the

looks which accompanied his words. Description is in vain ; my friend may conceive what to relate I find impossible.

On confessing his attachment, he betrayed no small embarrassment for the lady's reputation ; and fearful that I might doubt the propriety of her conduct, in strains of genuine affection (of which the recollection still is delightful) he expatiated on her accomplishments, and declared that, notwithstanding she had lost her youth, she still retained all her former beauty. Such real love I never before witnessed—it was the passion of an honest heart. Deride me not, my friend, when I acknowledge I was charmed with such unexampled tenderness and constancy. I was so impressed with his innocent declarations, that I sometimes think myself inspired with the love that he professed. I will take an early opportunity of seeing this admired lady ; yet to avoid her may probably be more prudent. Those charms, so bright in representation, may vanish when they are seen. I may not have her lover's eyes, though now I possess his thoughts, then shall I lose the Beauties of Imagination ; nor enjoy the satisfaction which I feel at present.

LETTER XI.

*May 30.*

"WHY not write to you?" Are you wise, and ask such a simple question? You well might have supposed that I was happy—that—in short, that I had met with another, dearer friend—that I had met—I cannot tell whom—

To give you a circumstantial account how I became acquainted with the most divine of her sex would be a difficult task. I am happy, happy beyond expression, and therefore unfit for a narrator.

She is an angel—a goddess; but these are titles, you will say, which every lover gives his mistress. Oh, she is all perfection; but I cannot describe that perfection, nor can I even tell how much I am charmed with it.

Such simplicity united with the clearest comprehension, such placidness with such animation, such serenity, such spirits; but these are poor phrases to convey a true idea of her character—a future time—but no, the present time, for I may never have another opportunity. To tell the truth, since I began to write I have repeatedly resolved to lay aside the pen and haste to meet her. This morning I had determined to stay at home;

nevertheless, I have been continually at the window to see if the sun be rising.

In vain my resolutions to the contrary. I have been to visit her—yes, my friend, I have just returned : and now, while seated at my breakfast, shall resume my pen. Oh, how delightful it was to see her with her sweet little brothers and sisters ; to see her——. But if I thus continue, you will be just as wise when I have finished as when I begun. I must endeavour to correct these wanderings, and give the whole account with regularity ; therefore beg your attention.

In a former letter I mentioned my acquaintance with the prince's steward, and the general invitation he gave me to his little kingdom, as I may justly term his present retirement. Somehow I postponed my intended visit so long, that probably I should never have paid it, had not mere accident discovered the treasure which this secluded spot concealed. At the request of some of the young inhabitants of the town, I had consented to make one at a *fête champêtre*, and had engaged a young lady for my partner, who boasted some share of beauty, and was agreeable, though nothing extraordinary. It was agreed that I should take my partner, and a relation of hers, in a coach, and in our way call for Charlotte, who had also promised her company at the ball. While driving up the avenue

which leads to the steward's house, my partner observed that I should now have an opportunity of seeing a very fine girl. "I shall introduce you, sir." "Ah, but," rejoined her relative, "you must beware of her charms." "For what reason?" I asked. "She is already engaged," answered my partner, "and to a very deserving youth, who, on the sudden death of his father, is gone to settle his affairs, and also to make interest for a situation at Court." I was indifferent to all this, my friend; for since the loss of Leonora, no woman had hitherto met with my attention. When we had reached the house, the sun was sunk behind the tops of the mountains: it became exceedingly sultry, and heavy clouds, which were gathering on the horizon, portended a storm. The ladies immediately caught the alarm, and expressed strong apprehensions that their promised pleasure would meet with some interruption. To remove their fears for the present, I assumed an air of gravity, and declaring a perfect knowledge of the atmosphere, assured them it would be nothing of any consequence. I now alighted, and a servant came to request us to wait a moment for her mistress. Having crossed the court which leads to this retired habitation, I ascended some steps, and entering the hall, beheld six sweet children (the eldest about eleven, and the youngest about two years old) all frisking round a

young lady of middling stature, but most elegant form, dressed in a plain white gown, with pale pink ribbons. She had a loaf in her hand, and was cutting bread and butter for the little ones, giving them all proportional pieces, in the most graceful and affectionate manner. Each held up its little hand for the piece while it was cutting, then cried, "Thank you, thank you," and ran to the door to see the company and the coach which was to carry away their Charlotte. On seeing me she politely apologised for her delay. "I am very sorry, sir, you should have the trouble to alight, and that I should thus detain the ladies, but the hurry of dressing had made me quite forget some domestic arrangements, and the children are not content with their supper but when they receive it from me." I made some reply, I forget what it was; I was transported with her address, her voice, her manner; and had just recovered from my astonishment, when she ran into another apartment for her fan and gloves. During her absence the little ones were stealing a look at me, and whispering together. I immediately approached the youngest, whose countenance is truly expressive: but the little fellow was avoiding me, when Charlotte, who now returned, said to him, "Come, Lewis, don't be afraid of your cousin." He then gave me his hand readily, and I gave him a kiss heartily. "Cousin,"

I repeated, while leading her to the carriage. "Do you then consider me worthy the honour of being related to you?" "Oh, sir," she replied, with a significant smile, "I have several cousins, and should be sorry if you were the most undeserving of the group." When she was departing, she bid Sophia, the eldest girl, to take care of the children, and to stay with her father as soon as he came home. She then bid the little ones to pay as much attention to Sophia as they would to her, which they readily promised, except a smart little girl, about six years old, who poutingly said, "But sister Sophia is not sister Charlotte; we must love sister Charlotte better." In the meantime the two eldest boys had climbed up behind the coach, and Charlotte, at my request, permitted them to accompany us to the end of the forest, on condition that they would behave quietly, and keep their places; but we had scarcely seated ourselves, and the ladies paid their mutual compliments, when Charlotte stopped the coach, and mildly entreated her brothers to descend. They begged leave to kiss her hand on parting, which the eldest did with all the affection of a boy of fifteen, and the youngest with as much tenderness as bespoke his years. She bid them remember her to the rest, and we then drove on. The lady who was related to my partner now inquired of Charlotte, how she liked

the last book she had sent her? To which she replied, "It meets with as little of my approbation as did the former which you were pleased to lend me, and therefore shall return it immediately." I asked the title of it, and was surprised when she mentioned "The Castle of Otranto." In everything she said she evinced consummate judgment and penetration—every word was intelligent, every look was expressive; and her countenance seemed to derive additional lustre from the satisfaction she felt when I joined in her opinion. "In my early days," she said, "romances gave me infinite delight. My greatest pleasure on a Sunday afternoon was to retire to some secret apartment, and read one of those extraordinary narratives. This relish for the *improbable* soon abated, and the *domestic* became more suited to my taste. I found myself interested in either the success or misfortune of my heroine, and am still delighted with such novels as "Grandison" and "Clarissa Harlowe." I have not much leisure now for reading; therefore the little that I do read generally consists of those scenes of life to which I am accustomed. I give the preference to those authors who follow nature, and remind me of those domestic delights—those affectionate scenes which I experience in my own family."

I was in raptures with the justice of her remarks, and found it difficult to conceal my emotions;

my heart was on fire, and I fear the flame will shortly consume me. She then delivered her opinion of other works, particularly "The Vicar of Wakefield," with so much pithiness and discernment, that my eagerness in coinciding with her must certainly have been noticed; but she alone engrossed my attention, and I was insensible of any other company in the coach. Charlotte, however, directed her conversation to the ladies, one of whom, my partner's relative, glanced a few significant looks at me, which were plain indications of her suspicions, but of which I took little notice.

Dancing became the next subject, when Charlotte observed, "That though it was an amusement which several condemned, still she was particularly partial to it. If her mind was ruffled by any casual uneasiness, she immediately repaired to her harpsichord, and by playing over a few country dances soon recovered her serenity." Good heaven! when she spoke, how my eyes were riveted! The harmony of her voice rendered me almost insensible of the words; I was lost in admiration of her sparkling eyes and graceful demeanour. When the coach stopped I alighted in a delirium, and absolutely found myself surrounded by all the company in the assembly room before I was conscious that I had entered it.

Charlotte and the other lady had been escorted by their partners, who were waiting to receive them at the door, when I, of course, handed in the lady who was under my protection. The ball commenced with minuets. I engaged one lady after another, and observed that the most awkward and ordinary were the most desirous to prolong them. Charlotte and her partner began a country dance, and, my friend, you cannot imagine the delight I felt when she came to perform the figure with me. Could you but see her dance ! She possesses all that vivacity and ease which are so essential ; her figure is graceful and elegant, her motions light and regular.

I would have engaged her for the second dance, but she politely assured me that she had been pre-engaged, and generously promised me her hand for the third, at the same time informing me with agreeable frankness that she was particularly fond of *allemandes*. “It is fashionable here,” said she, “for every couple to dance an *allemande*, but my partner is not accustomed to them, and wishes to be excused, and I know the lady with whom you dance is equally averse to them. I am convinced, from the manner of your dancing, you are sufficiently capable of an *allemande*, and, if agreeable, you shall propose it to my partner, and I will ask the permission of yours.” Thus it was settled, and

Charlotte's partner had also agreed to take mine during the interim. We then began, and for a time entertained ourselves with various entwinings of the arms. What grace and animation in every turn she displayed ; but when the measure was changed, the rest of the company, who were to turn round each other like spheres, produced some confusion through the irregularity of their motions. We had, however, the prudence to keep at a distance till the awkward ones had withdrawn, and then resumed our places with another couple and Charlotte's late partner and mine. I never danced before with so much satisfaction. I thought myself more than a mortal. To hold in my arms the most amiable of her sex ; to glide round the room with her as swift as lightning, and insensible of any other object. Oh, my friend, shall I confess ? I had then, even then, formed the resolution that whatever woman I loved and intended to marry, should never dance an *allemande* with any man but myself, and, as I live——But certainly you comprehend me.

We now walked round the room two or three times in order to recover breath. Charlotte then sat down. I had procured her some oranges from the sideboard, where they were making negus (the only ones which were left), which proved a very seasonable refreshment ; but politeness induced

her to offer some to a lady who sat next to her, and who too readily accepted the greatest number of them. Though a woman, I could not but envy her receiving a favour from so fair a hand.

We made the second couple in the third country dance, and while I was turning my partner round, and examining with exquisite delight those sweet looks and divine motions which indicated the most consummate pleasure, a lady, rather advanced in years, but whose affability had before attracted my notice, smiled at Charlotte, and twice as we passed her held up her finger, and then, in a most emphatical tone of voice, mentioned the name of Albert.

“Albert ! and who, may I presume to inquire, is Albert ?” Charlotte would then have satisfied my curiosity, but we were obliged to separate for six hands round at bottom, and in crossing over I perceived in her a sudden dejection. When I received her hand again to lead her away, I repeated the question. “Why,” said she, “should I conceal the truth ? Albert is a worthy gentleman to whom I am contracted.” I now recollected that the ladies had apprised me of this in the coach ; but then, my friend, it made no impression, for then I had not seen Charlotte, and till now the heart-rending thought had not occurred. I was suddenly disconcerted, and so confused that I forgot what I

was about, and threw the rest of the company into disorder by my mistakes; but the dexterous management of Charlotte soon restored us to our proper places.

Our dancing was now interrupted by a dreadful flash of lightning, which had been previously remarked in the horizon, and which I had endeavoured to persuade the ladies was the mere trifling consequence of excessive heat. The claps of thunder which accompanied it overpowered the music. Three ladies were so alarmed, they left the company immediately, and were followed by their partners. The confusion became general, and the music stopped. Terror is always heightened when it overtakes us in the hour of amusement, for the mind, which was diverted by pleasure, is more sensibly affected by any sudden distress, it being then more susceptible of the passions, and consequently more impressed by the change of joy to grief. No wonder then that the apprehensions of the ladies increased with the storm. One of the most resolute sat with her back to the window and stopped her ears against the noise of the thunder, as if that availed when the lightning penetrated; another fell upon her knees before her, uttered a short prayer, and hid her face in her lap; while a third rushed in between them, and clasping them both, shed a copious stream of tears. Some

were eager to go home, and others were so exceedingly terrified that they were blind to the indiscretion of their partners, who were now stealing from their lips those tender sighs which were offered up to heaven. The less gallant gentlemen went quietly down stairs to smoke their pipes, and the rest of the company having at length recovered some part of their reason, consented to follow the lady of the house, who prudently conducted them to an apartment where the window-shutters were closed, and the lightning in a great measure excluded. When we entered it, Charlotte placed the chairs in a ring, and requesting us to be seated proposed some *small* games for our further amusement. Great was the affectation of some of the ladies, and the impatience of others for *forfeits* to begin. The play agreed upon was *counting*, which Charlotte thus explained: "I shall go from right to left; you are to count as you sit, alternately, and as fast as possible. Whoever stops or makes a mistake, shall have a box on the ear." It was truly diverting to see her go round with her arms extended. "One," cried the first; "two," the second; "three," the third, and so on, till she mended her pace, and by her velocity created a mistake, which was accordingly rewarded with a box on the ear; another laughed, which was another box; and thus she kept it up, making her circles

still quicker. I had two boxes for my share, with which I was highly delighted, for I conceived them to be *harder* than the rest. Universal laughter, which created general confusion, terminated the game long before the thousand was counted. By this time the storm had considerably abated, and the company were forming little parties. Still intent upon one object, I followed Charlotte to the assembly-room. On our way she observed, "That the boxes which she had so freely bestowed on some of the company for their mistakes and omissions, were chiefly intended to dissipate their fears; for my part, I was as much alarmed as any of them, but by affecting courage in order to keep up their spirits, I also kept up my own." We went to the window. The thunder was still awful, though at a distance, soft rain continued to water the meadows and fill the air with refreshing odours. Charlotte, now reclining her head upon her lovely arm, fixed her expressive eyes on the surrounding country, then raised them to heaven, and let them fall upon me; I saw them bedewed with a tear, she placed her hand gently upon mine, and in a tone of energy, cried: "Oh, Klopstock!" My heart throbbed at the name—I felt a thousand sensations. His divine poem rushed to my recollection, and increased my ardent love for her whose sentiments are so congenial with mine. "Oh,

Klopstock!" I could no more than echo the name, my spirits were exhausted. I reclined on her lovely hand, imprinted on it a kiss of sympathy and affection, then looked up with riveted eyes on her sweet countenance, and beholding her bathed in tears, said, "Divine Klopstock, why canst thou not see thy apotheosis in this angel's face? Why canst thou not hear thy name, thy name so often profaned, uttered by this melodious voice? why has any voice but hers ever dared to utter it?"

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## LETTER XII.

*June 19.*

WHERE did I break off in my last? Oh, my friend! I forget all I have related. I can only recollect that I reached home, and went to bed at four o'clock in the morning, and could I have talked to my friend instead of writing, I should certainly have sat up all the morning. Did I tell what passed during our return from the ball? No matter—it will bear repetition; but you must excuse me now—another time shall be devoted to your service, for love has not obliterated friendship. It was a delightful morning, the storm had dissipated every vapour, nature seemed quite refreshed, and pearly

drops were gently falling from the trees. Sleep having closed the eyes of the ladies who accompanied us, Charlotte inquired if I was not desirous of some repose, hoping, if I was, her presence might be no restraint. "Thy presence," I replied, gazing on her lovely face, "must keep me awake—it would be impossible that I could close my eyes while thine were open." A modest blush overspread her cheeks, which soon resumed their natural bloom. We conversed till the coach stopped at her house, when the door was softly opened by the servant, who, in answer to Charlotte's impatient interrogatories, assured her the family were all well and in bed. When taking leave, I promised to see her soon again, and trust me, I was mindful of my promise. Since that day I have been regardless of the planets—the hours; time passes unnoticed. The world is nothing when she is absent, but oh ! it is a paradise when she is present. Farewell—I must see her immediately.

## LETTER XIII.

*June 21.*

SURE my days now are as happy as those which are reserved for the blessed ; let my future life be what it will, I must confess, that in the present I have enjoyed the most perfect tranquillity. You are acquainted with the village of Walheim—I am now entirely settled there, about three miles distant from Charlotte, and in this my retreat am as happy as the happiest man can boast. Little I imagined when I fixed upon this place for my retirement, that it contained so great a prize ; during my rambles how often have I beheld that rural seat, which now contains my chief delight ; sometimes I have looked at it from the top of the mountain, sometimes from the meadow on the opposite side of the river. Oft have I reflected on the vain pursuits of man ; blind to the riches of his native clime, he extends his views, and wanders in search of new discoveries, but these novelties soon lose their charms ; he then pants for those pleasures which he has left behind, and when he returns becomes satisfied with his former habits, nor cares how the rest of the world is employed. The first time I beheld this charming spot I became attached to it, the beauties of nature, the delightful prospects of woods, of mountains, and of

① Bk. Schiller's penetrating  
remark our feelings for nature  
and simplicity are very different  
from those of the ancients. It approaches  
far more nearly that which we

THE SORROWS OF WERTHER!

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rocks. Oh! couldst thou but see them! yet I was  
dissatisfied, and left them with as many wishes as  
before. Alas! distance, my friend, resembles  
futurity; there is an awful darkness before us, which  
to contemplate involves the mind in obscurity.  
Delighted with the scenes which imagination forms,  
we seek them with enthusiastic ardour; but should  
reality bring them to view, all our delight vanishes.  
Thus the long-absent traveller becomes anxious to  
return home, and in his cottage, with his wife and  
children, enjoys more happiness resulting from  
domestic industry, than he had experienced during  
his distant searches.

Here in my retirement I am happy. I rise with  
the sun, gather my own peas, sit, shell them, and  
read Homer. I put them into the pot, cover them,  
stir them when they boil, and then picture to my  
mind the lovers of Penelope killing and dressing  
their cattle. Oh! what agreeable sensations arise  
from reflections on the patriarchal life, and without  
vanity I may say, such a life is mine! I feel all  
the simple, the genuine pleasure of a peasant, who  
beholds on the table the cabbage which his own  
hand had raised, and while he enjoys his comfort-  
able meal, recollects with joy the fine morning on  
which he planted it, the lovely evening in which he  
watered it, and the pleasure of successive days in  
seeing it grow and flourish.

much experience for the ancients  
the ancients felt naturally; we, on our  
part, feel what is natural. It was  
certainly a very different inspiration  
that filled the soul of Homer when he  
depicted the divine cowherd swine

Natural  
simplicity

... to the young Werther. . . when he  
reads the *poetry* . . . the feeling  
of experience for nature, *renewed*  
that of a sick man for health.  
*Simple & Sentimental Poetry*  
LETTER XIV. (Ed. XIV 413)  
June 29. h. h. 279

THE physician of the town came the day before yesterday to pay a visit to the steward. He found me on the floor, playing with, and tickling the children ; we were romping, and making a terrible noise. The doctor, who is exceedingly formal and sedate, for ever adjusting the plaits of his ruffles during a long speech, and pulling up his chitterling close to his chin at the conclusion, looked upon this conduct of mine as very much beneath the dignity of a man. His look sufficiently expressed his disapprobation ; but neither his frowning countenance nor his solemn discourse had any effect upon me, for I still continued to rebuild the card-houses, which the children had thrown down. This gentleman has since told everybody that the steward's children, who were bad enough before, would now be completely spoiled by Werter. Yes, my friend ! I am fond of children, and love them next to Charlotte. When in these little beings I observe the seeds of all those virtues and faculties, which will hereafter be so essential to them ; when in the bold I foresee future steadiness and constancy ; in the capricious, that levity and good-humour which will resist the frowns of fortune, and make their

# children

journey through life easy; but when I perceive them all innocence, all mildness, then I call to mind the divine words of our teacher, "Except you be like one of these little ones." And yet, my friend! we are apt to spurn children, who may be greater than ourselves; we treat them like vassals when under our care, and deny them ever to follow their own inclinations. What! have we none ourselves? whence then do we derive this exclusive prerogative? Is it from the superiority of years and experience? Though in the sacred records we find them regarded in heaven, they are not to be regarded upon earth. They *are* what we *were*, but . . . . farewell, my friend! I will no longer exhaust your patience, and my own spirits.

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## LETTER XV.

July 1.

THERE is a worthy old lady in the town, who has been given over by her physician, and expressed a desire that Charlotte should be with her during her last moments. She is accordingly gone, and I am conscious is truly capable of administering balmy consolation to the sick, for I have been myself indisposed. Last week I accompanied her

to the vicar of St. —, at a small village between the mountains, about three miles distant. His sister Sophia was with us. We arrived about four o'clock, and when we entered the court, which is shaded by two walnut trees, we perceived the good old gentleman sitting upon a bench before his door. When he saw Charlotte, he forgot his old age and staff, and rising from his seat, was hastening to meet her, but she ran to him—made him resume his seat, and sat down by his side. She presented to him her father's best respects, and then began to kiss a little chubby boy, the old man's favourite. Oh ! my friend, I wish you could have seen her—I wish you could have witnessed her attention to this old gentleman ; how she raised her voice in consequence of his deafness, and told him of several young and hearty people, who had died suddenly in the prime of life ; how she commended the virtues of the Caulstadt baths, and approved highly of his intention to try their efficacy the ensuing summer, at the same time assuring him that he was considerably altered for the better since the last time she saw him. I employed the interim in paying my respects to his lady, who is some years younger than her husband. The old gentleman was quite cheerful, and while I was admiring the beauty of the walnut trees, which formed such an agreeable shade over our heads, he began, with

great circumlocution, to give us their history. "As to the first, I cannot ascertain its origin; some say it was planted by a clergyman, and some say by his successor, but the second, in that corner, is exactly the age of my wife—it will be fifty years old next October. It was planted in the morning by her father, and in the evening she was born. He was my immediate predecessor here, and I cannot express his strong attachment to this tree; indeed, I am particularly partial to it myself. Under this very tree was my wife sitting on a log of wood, and knitting, when I first entered this yard, then a poor tutor, seven-and-twenty years ago." Charlotte now inquired for his daughter; he said she was gone to the meadows with a Mr. Smith to see the haymaking. He then resumed his story, and told us how he ingratiated himself with the old vicar and his daughter, how he became first his curate then his successor. This history was scarcely concluded when his daughter returned, accompanied by Mr. Smith, who saluted Charlotte in the most affectionate manner. She is a sprightly, genteel girl, of a brown complexion, with whom a sensible man might live very happy in the country. Her admirer (for such Mr. Smith immediately appeared to be) is agreeable in his person, but reserved in his manners. Charlotte endeavoured more than once to draw him into

conversation, but in vain. I was displeased, being conscious that his taciturnity did not proceed from a deficiency of talents, but the want of affability ; and this my opinion was soon confirmed, for whilst we were walking with Frederica (the vicar's daughter) I entered into conversation with her, and immediately this gentleman's countenance, which is naturally dark, became so exceedingly gloomy, that Charlotte pulled me by the sleeve as a gentle hint. I am grieved to the heart whenever I see men thus torment each other, particularly when, in the flower of youth, in the fulness of pleasure, they waste those fleeting, sunshiny days in idle altercations, and never see their faults but when too late to correct them. Impressed with this idea, I could not forbear, during our collation at evening, when the conversation turned upon the happiness and misery of life, to take that opportunity of inveighing thus against ill-humour. "It is a general supposition that the days of happiness are inferior in number to those of misery, but it appears to me that the complaint is without foundation. Were the good things which providence has allotted us always enjoyed with a becoming easy disposition, that benignity of temper, that longanimity would smooth the rugged path of life, and render the pressure of unavoidable evils tolerable." "But," rejoined the vicar's wife,

“we cannot always command our tempers ; a great deal depends on the constitution—if the body be disordered, so is the mind.” “Then, madam,” I answered, “let us consider this disposition as a disease, and see if there be no remedy for it.” “That is more to the purpose,” replied Charlotte, “and in this respect I think a great deal depends upon ourselves ; for my part, when anything happens to ruffle my temper I take a walk in the garden, I sing some lively air, and by these active means recover my usual tranquillity.” “Such,” I observed, “is precisely my meaning. Ill-humour may be compared to sloth, it is indeed a degree of indolence, and mankind are naturally indolent ; but when we can subdue that evil habit, then we proceed with alacrity, and find a secret satisfaction in being thus engaged.” Frederica was all attention. Mr. Smith objected “that we were not masters of ourselves, and still less of our feelings.” I observed in reply, “that the disagreeable habit in question was one that everybody wished to get rid of, that we were not aware of our own strength till we had put it to the test, that the sick consult physicians, and tacitly submit to the most scrupulous regimen and nauseous medicine for the recovery of health.”

As I now perceived the old gentleman leaning over his head to partake of our conversation, I

accordingly raised my voice, and addressing myself to him, proceeded—"Though the censure of the pulpit has been vehement against almost every offence, there is no one, I believe, has ever yet preached against the spleen." "Oh," said he, "that subject only belongs to those who preach in town; it would not be understood by the peasantry, though, by-the-by, the introduction of it now and then here would not be amiss, were it only for the benefit of my wife and the steward." This sarcastic remark occasioned a hearty laugh, in which the old gentleman joined, but it gave him a fit of coughing that interrupted the discourse for some time. Mr. Smith then renewed the subject: "I think, sir, you have carried the matter too far when you call ill-humour an offence." "By no means," I replied; "that which is pernicious to ourselves and others deserves the name of offence. Are we not sufficiently unfortunate in not being able to render each other happy, without also endeavouring to deprive each other of that little satisfaction which, if left to ourselves, we might be capable of enjoying? Show me the man who is addicted to ill-humour and conceals it, who bears the whole burthen of it himself, without disturbing the peace of those around him. This peevishness arises from a consciousness of demerit, from a discontent which cohabits with envy, and is cherished

by weak vanity. We cannot bear to see others happy when we have not contributed towards that happiness." The energy with which I uttered these last words attracted Charlotte's notice—she looked me in the face and smiled; but a tear started from Frederica's eye, which encouraged me to proceed. "May they be strangers themselves to pleasure, who exert their influence over a tender heart to deprive it of that genuine pleasure it is formed naturally to enjoy. No presents, though ever so many, no attention, though ever so great, can for a moment compensate for the loss of that tranquillity and peace of mind which envy and tyranny have destroyed." At this time my heart was full; past circumstances came to recollection, and my eyes were filled with tears. "Every day," added I, "we should say to ourselves, *what good can I do for my friends?* We can only endeavour not to interrupt their happiness, but try to improve it by participation; for when violent passions torment the soul, when bitter anguish rends the heart, it is not in our power to afford them the least momentary relief, and when at last some fatal malady seizes the poor wretch, whose untimely grave is already prepared; when, extended and exhausted, he raises up to heaven his dim eyes, when the cold drops of death are on his brow, then thou standest before him like a

self-condemned criminal, thou perceivest thy error, but it is too late, thou knowest thy inability to relieve ; thou feelest, sensibly feelest, that all thy gifts, thy actions, cannot avail either to restore health, or administer temporary consolation to the departing soul."

While uttering these words, the recollection of a similar scene, at which I had been present, struck my mind with full force ; I immediately applied my handkerchief to my eyes, and withdrew abruptly, nor did I recover myself till I heard Charlotte's voice importuning me to return home. How tenderly she chid me on the way, how kindly she represented the impropriety of that deep interest and warmth with which I am too much affected whenever I undertake an argument, and generously entreated me to moderate that heat, which must wear me out and shorten my days. Dear Charlotte ! Yes ; I will take care of myself. I will live for thee !

## LETTER XVI.

*July 6.*

CHARLOTTE is still with her indisposed friend, for, ever kind and ready, she mitigates pain and affords pleasure wherever she goes. Yesterday in the afternoon she took a walk with her little sisters ; I was told of it, immediately followed her, and we walked together for about four miles. On our return we stopped awhile at that fountain near the town, to which I have been so partial, and which partiality is now of course increased. Charlotte took a seat on the wall, and we stood before her. While contemplating the place, I recollected the many solitary hours I had passed there when my mind was wholly disengaged. "Dear fountain," thought I, "since that time thy refreshing stream, which had afforded me so much delight, has been unnoticed." While thus ruminating, and my eyes fixed upon the place, one of the children, I perceived, was hastily ascending the steps with a glass of water. I now looked at Charlotte, and my heart was filled with the most lively sensations. At this time the little girl approached with the glass of water, and Marianne, another sister, was going to take it, when she immediately exclaimed in the most affectionate

manner, "No; sister Charlotte must drink first." I could not forbear taking her up in my arms and giving her a hearty kiss for her expressive tenderness. She began to weep. Charlotte told me I was too rash; I was sorry for it. Then, taking her little sister by the hand, she led her down the steps to the spring. "There, Amelia, wash your face, my dear, and all will be well." I remarked the alacrity with which she obeyed; having dipped her little hands in the water, she rubbed her cheeks, fully persuaded that the kiss was washed away, and all the danger removed of her getting a beard. Charlotte then assured her that she had washed enough, but she still rubbed on, imagining the more she rubbed the better it must be. Oh! my friend, I have never paid the rites of baptism more attention or respect; and when they ascended I could with pleasure have prostrated myself at Charlotte's feet, and adored her as a saint who had purified the nation.

This circumstance I related in the evening to a gentleman who has been celebrated for his understanding; but how seldom is common sense united with modern understanding: I was deceived in my opinion of him. He railed at Charlotte for imprudent conduct. "She acted wrong," he said, "by encouraging the child's weakness and superstition: follies which cannot be too early

eradicated." This gentleman, I understood, became a father some few days ago, and was probably devising a new system of education. I therefore took no notice of his pedantic humour, convinced that, as we are most happy ourselves when indulged in our little humours, though bordering upon folly, we should likewise give way to those of little children.

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## LETTER XVII.

*July 8.*

How simple I am ! why should I be so anxious—so impatient to meet a single look ? What puerility it is ! We have been at Walheim, the ladies went in a carriage, but alighted to walk in the garden, when I thought that Charlotte's fine sparkling eyes—but how I am wandering, I must be brief, for I am half asleep. On their return to their carriage, young Welst, Silfstradt, Andran, and myself, were talking to them at the window ; the gentlemen were all full of spirits. I watched Charlotte's eyes ; methought they strayed about from one to another, and never fixed on me—on me, who, notwithstanding their instability, remained stationary, and beheld no other object but her ; my heart was bidding a thousand and a

thousand farewells, yet she never vouchsafed me a single look. The carriage drove off, and my eyes followed it with tears. She put her head out of the window and looked back ; alas, for whom was that look intended ? was it for me ? what suspense ! but suspense may be consolation ; there is hope that the look was intended for me. Good night ! I see my weakness.

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## LETTER XVIII.

*July 10.*

You cannot conceive, my friend, how ridiculous I appear in company when Charlotte's name is mentioned, but particularly when I am asked how I like her ? Like her ! I cannot bear that icy expression. What must the man be who can only like her, who feels not the fascination of her bewitching charms ? How I like her ! thus a few days ago some one asked me how I liked the Poems of Ossian.

## LETTER XIX.

*July 11.*

THE lady whom Charlotte has visited in town is still in a dangerous state ; she has my constant prayers for her recovery, as I suffer much by her sickness, which deprives me of Charlotte's company. I had the pleasure of seeing her to-day, when she communicated a very extraordinary secret. The lady's husband is such an avaricious, time-serving man, that during his marriage he has scarcely allowed his wife a sufficiency ; which has rendered her very unhappy, though she endeavoured all in her power to conform with her narrow circumstances. When the physician gave her over, she desired to see her husband. Agreeable to her request he approached her bed-side, and in the presence of Charlotte she thus addressed him : "I wish before my death to reveal a circumstance, which to conceal might hereafter occasion much embarrassment: I have endeavoured to be as economical as possible, but for these thirty years I have been obliged to deceive you ; when we were first married the weekly allowance was but a trifle, this you did not think proper to increase as the family increased, and during all our most expensive times, the allowance was only as before. To this I

submitted without murmuring, but have been obliged to discharge the overplus from the weekly income of the dairy. It would not have been suspected that I had meddled with any cash in reserve, but it has been through necessity and not extravagance, and had this secret been buried with me in the grave, your future housekeeper must have experienced considerable difficulty, particularly when it might be insisted that your departed wife had maintained the family on the weekly pittance you were pleased to bestow."

Charlotte's observations on such mercenary conduct, which absolutely obliged the poor lady "to rob Peter to pay Paul," were keen and energetic. "The virtues of a wife (said she) were perhaps supposed to augment his scanty allowance, and endue it with all the renovating virtues of the *widow's pitcher*."

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## LETTER XX.

July 13.

I CANNOT mistake, I read in her eyes the interest I have in her heart; it is palpable, the flattering idea is confirmed by my own heart, which whispers me—shall I dare pronounce the fond hope?—that—*she loves me!* Loves me! I feel myself exalted at the

thought. How—yes, I may venture to tell my friend, for he will readily comprehend. How I honour myself since honoured with her affection! Is this arrogance? no, consciousness of truth! Who is the man that shall supplant me in her love? And yet, when she mentions Albert's name, mentions it with respect and tenderness, alas! I feel myself as an ambitious officer who is degraded, stripped of his honour, deprived of his power, and obliged to surrender his sword.

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## LETTER XXI.

*July 16.*

IF by accident I touch her hand, how my heart beats, and the blood boils in my veins; if my feet meet hers under the table, I withdraw them with the utmost precipitation, but impelled by a secret something, restore them to their former situation, and feel the most uncommon sensations. I am her confidant, her friend, but—innocent soul! she little conceives the torment she occasions, when communicating the secrets of her intended marriage. When she places her hand upon mine, and in the eagerness of discourse draws her chair so near that I catch the fragrance of her breath, oh,

Heaven ! the vivid lightning is not more electrical. Alas ! my friend, should I ever dare to abuse this unsuspecting ingenuity ; but you know my heart, it is not corrupt ; it is frail, indeed, very frail, and frailty is the seed of corruption ! I look upon her as sacred, her presence is my only wish, and when I see her I feel the most enthusiastic delight ! There is a favourite air of hers, which she plays on the harpsichord with exquisite taste and energy ; it is full of expression and interest, yet is simple ; whenever she begins it, all secret sorrow is banished ; thus are verified the recorded charms of music, and its power to dissipate melancholy madness. At the very time when gloomy fancy points to self-destruction, that charming, tender air revives the spirits, disperses every mist of horror, and the downcast looks of despondency are changed to smiles of perfect joy.



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## LETTER XXII.

*July 18.*

WHAT avails the possession of worlds to the heart that is destitute of love ? 'Tis like a magic lantern without light ; when illuminated, the several figures are then displayed on the whitened wall ;

what though like those transitory shadows are the effects of love ! still they can render us happy when, like children, we are delighted with visionary pleasures. I shall not see Charlotte to-day ; company, unexpected and unavoidable, prevent me. However, I devised some message to send my servant with to her house, that in her answer I might have something before my eyes to compensate for her absence ; with what impatience I waited for his return. With what joy I received her answer, which with difficulty I suppressed, in order to conceal my love from the messenger ! The Bologna stones, when placed in the sun, are said to attract its rays and retain them, so as to give light for a considerable time after they are placed in the dark. Her answer was just the same, it reflected the lustre of those eyes which had been employed to write it, the whiteness of the hand which had delivered it to the messenger, and therefore became most dear and interesting to me. I would not have parted with it for crowns. Forbear your smiles, my friend ; nothing that contributes to our happiness can be justly called an illusion.



## LETTER XXIII.

*July 19.*

THIS morning when I awoke, and with all possible calmness opened the window to behold the sun as he was peeping, I exclaimed, "I shall see her!" Yes, I shall see Charlotte. I have no other wish to form for the remainder of the day; in that sweet hope all—all is included!

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## LETTER XXIV.

*July 20.*

YOUR advice to me to accept the ambassador's proposal to accompany him to Vienna is by no means agreeable. I despise subordination and ceremony, and every one knows him to be a sullen, supercilious character. You say it is my mother's wish that I had some employ. I smile at the idea. Am I not always active? and is it not the same whether I am shelling peas or beans? This world is all misery, and he who to please the world more than himself struggles for riches and honour in a manner not congenial with his inclinations is, in my opinion, a mere simpleton.

## LETTER XXV.

July 24.

IN answer to your repeated inquiries about my proficiency in drawing, I must candidly inform you that I have lately paid it very little attention. I have had an historical piece some time in hand, but have made little or no progress in it. The fact is, that I am now so disposed I cannot deviate from Nature. I understand her better—she is my model in all her various productions ; but, in truth, the present state of my mind renders me incapable of that attention and perseverance which are so essential for copying with true expression all her little beauties ; every attempt wants execution, every outline is deficient ; the colours all swim before my eyes ! Perhaps I should succeed better were I to attempt something in relief. Should this humour continue, my next essay shall be with clay or wax. Thrice have I begun Charlotte's picture, and as often disgraced my pencil ; my likenesses are by no means as good as formerly. I cannot account for this strange falling off, which gives me no small uneasiness. I have, however, taken her profile, and with this must content myself for the present.

\* This remark might  
 apply to many of <sup>the</sup> romantic poets.

## LETTER XXVI.

July 26.

EVERYTHING my dear Charlotte requests she may depend upon being punctually performed. Her further orders will be an addition to my happiness. Command as often as you will, the last commission will always be the most welcome ; but there is one thing I must entreat, do not put sand upon your letters when you write ; for to-day, while I was giving one of them an eager kiss, the sand went between my teeth.

*(Charlotte says)*

## LETTER XXVII.

July 27.

How repeatedly have I resolved not to see her so often ; but how weak are a lover's resolutions ! Alas ! my friend, it is more easy to talk than to act. Every day I yield to the temptation, though every night I say to myself, "I go not to-morrow ;" but when to-morrow comes an irresistible something leads me to her presence ; but do not suppose these *somethings* are devoid of motives. If, when parting, she says, "I hope you'll see me again to-morrow," could I possibly neglect going ? Or, if she

gives me a commission, I may find it necessary to return personally the answer. Sometimes the day is inviting, and for the sake of exercise I walk to Walheim. When I am there, it is but two short miles to her dwelling, and I must needs proceed farther. Could I return, and I so near? Impossible. I remember an old story of my grandmother's about a huge mountain of loadstone. Its attraction was so great that whenever any vessel came within a certain distance, the nails flew to the mountain, and the wretched crew were lost among the disjointed planks. My friend will easily conceive the application. A world of such mountains could not vie with Charlotte in attraction.

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## LETTER XXVIII.

*July 30.*

ALBERT is arrived and Werter must depart. Were he the most deserving, the most noble of mankind, and I in every respect his inferior, I could not bear to see him in the possession of so much female beauty and perfection. Possession! yes—he is the destined bridegroom! A worthy, accomplished character, whom every one must esteem. Fortunately, indeed, I was not present at their first

admiration for qualities not possessed

interview. It would have rent my heart ! And he was so considerate as to restrain his fondness for Charlotte in my sight. Heaven reward him for it ! I must respect him, too, for the esteem he entertains for this divine girl ; he is very kind to me, but I am certain his attention proceeds from Charlotte's favourable report of me. The women are remarkably clever in preserving harmony among rivals. Sometimes their endeavours fail, but the experiment is necessary, for when it does succeed it redounds chiefly to their own advantage.

In spite of all, I cannot withhold my esteem for Albert ; the evenness of his temper is a striking contrast with the impetuosity of mine, which in vain I endeavour to conceal, notwithstanding he is possessed of considerable feeling, and appears truly sensible of the invaluable store which he possesses in Charlotte. He has never betrayed the least sign of ill-humour, which of all dispositions is, you know, the one that I most detest. He seems to regard me as a man of taste and understanding, while my partiality for Charlotte and the pleasure I discover in her company apparently augment his triumph and affection. I cannot say whether their private moments may not be interrupted with some little jealousies, but I am certain, were I in his situation, I should not evince so much ease and composure. Oh, love ! love ! how are thy votaries

tormented ! Whatever may be Albert's situation, all that pleasure which I have experienced in Charlotte's presence now must terminate. Is this weakness or infatuation ? Call it what you please. Alas ! I know—I feel what it *is* ! Before Albert's arrival I knew what now I know. I was conscious that I had no pretensions to her, nor did I presume to claim any ; for all my seeming presumption was the effect of her irresistible charms. Yet now, how foolish, how astonished I look, because the real master of the treasure appears, and I am obliged to resign that which was never mine ! I lament my fate, I despise my weakness, but doubly despise those cold mortals who gravely argue the necessity of submission and fortitude when there is no remedy. I cannot endure those shallow philosophers—those ridiculous preachers. I stray about the woods, I return to Charlotte's when fatigued, I find her sitting in the bower at the bottom of the garden with Albert, I am bewildered, act like a child, play a thousand antics. “For Heaven's sake,” said Charlotte to-day, “be more composed ; your violent spirits are quite alarming !” I confess, my friend, that of late I watch Albert's motions, and when business calls him away I steal to Charlotte during his absence, and am never so happy as when I find her alone.

## LETTER XXIX.

*August 8.*

BE assured, my friend, that when I railed at those who might offer their cold advice, and said I could not endure such ridiculous preachers, I was far from supposing that you could be one of the number ; but there is truth in what you say. However, I shall make but one objection. When two opposite methods are proposed, we seldom find that either is ever taken. Our actions and opinions are as strikingly various as our looks and features ; be not offended then if I grant the justice of your conclusions, but take a middle way to evade them. You say that either I have hopes of obtaining Charlotte, or I have not. What, then, is the result ? I should, in the first case, continue the pursuit, and seize every opportunity for the accomplishment of my wishes. In the second case, you say I should act like a man, and forget an unfortunate attachment, which in the end must be attended with destruction. All this is very true, my friend ; but permit me to observe how much more easy it is to teach resignation than to learn it. Would you ask the almost exhausted wretch, who is pining under a languid malady that is daily wearing out his constitution, to terminate at once

his misery by poison or a dagger? Surely the very disorder which deprives him of corporeal strength, deprives him also of that mental firmness which the desperate deed requires? This comparison, however, you may answer by another simile, and say, who would not for the preservation of his life submit, without delay, to the amputation of a limb? It may be so. I know not what to reply. Indeed, my friend, I have often resolved to depart from danger, but could find no refuge.

## IN CONTINUATION.

I PERCEIVE from my memorandum-book, which I have for some time neglected, but accidentally took up, that I have been remarkably minute and attentive to every little circumstance. It is strange—with what perspicuity I have considered every-thing, and how childishly I act; I still remain clear in my ideas, and yet there is not the least hope of my recovery.

## LETTER XXX.

*August 10.*

✓ WHAT a scene of bliss is now before me—now within my reach, if I were capable of enjoying it ! So many agreeable circumstances seldom combined during the life of any one man to promote his happiness, but, alas ! I feel too sensibly that happiness depends entirely on the mind, and not on mere advantages. To be considered as making one of the most worthy of families, to be regarded as a son, by his children as a brother, and by Charlotte—by Albert too, that amiable youth, who, in the most cordial manner, receives me as a friend, and esteems me next to his intended bride ! How pleased would you be, could you overhear our conversation, and mutual praises of Charlotte, as we walk together ! In truth, nothing can be more strange and ridiculous than this connection, and yet there is something in it which frequently melts me into tears. Whenever he talks of Charlotte's mother, a woman of respectability, when he describes her last moments, and that most affecting scene in which she resigned to her amiable daughter the future care of her children and family ; when he paints the attention and economy of this her dutiful daughter, as soon as she supplied the

mother's place, her careful management as a housewife, her affection as a mother to her brothers and sisters ; and though faithfully discharging those duties every day, yet still preserving her wonted cheerfulness and agreeable vivacity, I walk by his side, pick up flowers on the way, and most industriously make a nosegay, which I throw into the first rivulet we approach, and watch it as it gently slides down the stream, and sinks, without being conscious of what I am doing. I forget now if I told you that Albert has obtained a situation here. He has procured a place at court, and is universally respected. Indeed, few men whom I have seen are, for punctuality and attention, so well calculated for business.

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## LETTER XXXI.

*August 12.*

WITHOUT doubt there cannot be a more amiable character than Albert. Our conversation yesterday was very singular, and worthy communication. My motive for calling was to take leave of him, for I had proposed to spend some days on the mountains, where at present I am writing. While walking up and down his apartment, I perceived

his pistols, and requested the loan of them for my journey. "You are heartily welcome to them," he replied, "if you will take the trouble of loading them, for I only hang them up there for mere form-sake." I now looked at one of them, and he proceeded. "I was once very near paying dearly for my vigilance, and since have never loaded any fire-arms that I keep." I requested an account of the accident. "I was at a friend's house in the country for about three months," he said, "and always enjoyed the most uninterrupted repose, though my pistols were unloaded. But one rainy afternoon, having nothing to do, the thought occurred that probably the house might be broken open and robbed at night, and that these pistols might be of some service, that—in short, you know how a person will act when in an indolent humour. Accordingly I gave them to my servant to clean and load; he, more full of play than thought, was endeavouring to frighten the maid, and one of the pieces (Heaven knows how) went off whilst the rammer was in it, which hit her in her right hand and tore off her thumb; you may easily conceive the distress which this accident produced, and the expense, for it was attended with a surgeon's bill. Since that time I have never kept loaded pistols in my room. In vain, indeed, all the vigilance of man—he cannot foresee, he cannot avert threatening

danger." Everything in Albert I like but his *indeeds*; however, you know there is no rule without an exception. His behaviour is truly correct; and whenever he advances any assertion that is too general, or doubtful, his candour and apprehension of giving offence induce him to use so many softening and extenuating terms, that in the end his assertions are none at all. According to custom he was, on the present occasion, deeply immersed in his subject. The discourse consequently became tedious, I was no longer attentive, but devoted entirely to my own thoughts. During my reverie, I applied the mouth of the pistol to my forehead. "What are you about?" cried Albert, snatching the pistol hastily from my hand. "It is not charged," I replied. "What then?" he retorted with vehemence; "why make use of such action though it be not charged? I am surprised how any man can be so mad as to shoot himself; and even the bare idea makes me shudder." "How is it possible," I replied, "that any one in speaking of an action can peremptorily say it is mad, wise, proper, or improper? What mean those rash declarations? Are the secret motives of such actions duly considered? whence it originates, and why it becomes indispensable? If such examination had been made, your decision could not possibly have been so hasty." "But," said Albert, "it must be acknowledged

that some actions, let them proceed from whatever motives they may, are still in their nature criminal." I gave a negligent assent. "However," I continued, "some further exceptions should here be made; robbery is allowed to be a crime, yet that unhappy wretch who is thereto driven by extreme poverty, who takes a little from the affluent to save himself and perishing family, is he more deserving of punishment or compassion? Who would call that husband wilful murderer, who in the first instance of just resentment has sacrificed a faithless wife and her perfidious paramour? Who would call that credulous fair a wanton, who, deluded by false promises, has yielded to the temptations of an artful seducer? Our very laws, we find, hard and rigorous as they are, will in those cases admit of mercy, and waive the punishment." "But these examples," remarked Albert, "are by no means applicable. The man who is impelled by sudden and violent passion is incapable of reflection, and must be considered as a drunkard or madman." "Oh, ye moralists!" I cried, with an indignant smile, "with what calmness, with what apathy you can judge, you can talk of violence, inebriation, insanity; but you are cool and sedate, you despise the intoxicated, you shun the insane, you pass on to the other side like the priest, and like the Pharisee thank God that you are not like one of them."

I have more than once experienced the effects of liquor, and at those times have been guilty of the most extravagant passions, which I am not ashamed to confess—to me it has been a lesson; for every man we find who displays any superior talents, or performs any extraordinary deed, is looked upon as drunk or insane. Even in private life these idle notions prevail, for what do the world say of the youth who is remarkably generous and brave? What but that he is drunk, or out of his senses? Blush! ye philosophers—ye moralists! blush—blush!” “These are some of your romantic notions,” rejoined Albert; “you always exceed the mark, and certainly you deviate now considerably from the subject, when you compare suicide with heroic actions—an acknowledged weakness—for it is certainly more easy to die, notwithstanding the terrors of death, than to live in a state of extreme misery, and bear our misfortunes with becoming fortitude.”

I was now very near dropping the subject; for nothing exhausts my patience so much as when those unmeaning commonplace opinions are obtruded in opposition to the flowing sentiments of the heart; but I soon smothered my indignation, for I am so accustomed of late to these paralogisms, that they make little or no impression upon me. “However,” I observed with some warmth, “you

call suicide a weakness ; but take care, I entreat you, not to be carried away by mere sounds. Suppose a nation groaning under the galling yoke of despotism were at last to rebel and break their chains, would you call such insurrection a weakness? During a conflagration, a man, to save his house from the threatening flames, will exert all his strength ; and burdens, which before he could scarcely move, carry with facility. He who, in the moment of just indignation, attacks and puts to flight half a dozen of his adversaries—are such men to be accused of weakness? And, my good sir, if resistance be an indication of fortitude, why should that which is superlative resistance be called a weakness?” Albert paused, and replied, “All these examples, begging your pardon, are still, I think, foreign to the subject in question.” “That may be probable indeed,” I answered, “for it has been frequently observed there is a kind of extravagance in my method of combining things. Let us then endeavour to represent this business in another light ; let us inquire what is the situation of that man who resolves to lay down the burden of life, a burden that is in general so much desired ; and let us also enter into his feelings, for without such examination it is impossible to discuss the subject fairly.

“Human nature,” I continued, “has certain

\* Imagination the combining force - Reason the

bounds; it is only capable of enduring a certain degree of pleasure, sorrow, and pain, and when this degree is exceeded, nature then becomes exhausted. We are not to inquire the strength or weakness of a man, but his capability of enduring those mental or corporeal evils which befall him. In my opinion, it is as great an absurdity to call that man a coward who puts a period to his existence as it is to call him one who falls a victim to a malignant fever." "Paradox!" interrupted Albert, "mere paradox!" "Not so much as you may think," I replied. "You must acknowledge a disease to be mortal whereby nature is so violently attacked, and her strength so far exhausted, that the little which remains is insufficient to preserve animation, or restore its wonted motion; let us then apply this to the mind; let us examine the force of impressions, and the operations of ideas upon it, till at length a violent passion takes entire possession thereof, and all its former powers are consequently subdued and destroyed; in vain the man of keen penetration, sound understanding, and cool temper, beholds the miserable situation of the wretch that is thus reduced—of what avail is any advice which he can give him? he is like a man in health who sits by the bed of his departed friend without being able to communicate to him the smallest portion of his strength."

This kind of reasoning was in Albert's opinion

differentiating (cf. Shelley  
Wordsworth &c.)

too general. I gave him, for example, the story of a young girl who had lately drowned herself, which he had heard before, but which on this occasion I repeated. "An innocent young creature, so accustomed to the narrow sphere of domestic toil, and her weekly occupations, that all her enjoyment was a walk in the fields on a Sunday, a dance or two during the holidays, while the rest of her leisure time was spent in conversing with her neighbours relative to the news and all the little disturbances in the village. At length her heart is inflamed with new desires, which the adulation of mankind increases; all her former pleasures gradually become insipid. She accidentally meets with a youth, and another attachment imperceptibly takes place; from that time her every hope is centred in him; she is blind to all the rest of the world, for he alone is the object of her attention—of her thoughts. Ignorant of the baneful pleasures which arise from idle vanity, in the simplicity of her heart she entertains no other wish but to be his; she fondly dreams that she shall be his wife, and fondly hopes to realise the flattering dream; these hopes are confirmed by his repeated promises and ardent vows; this love is increased by his apparent passion, anticipation fills her with rapture, her joy is beyond bounds; at length she stretches out her arms to embrace the dear object of her affection, but, fatal

delusion ! her lover is false, he has forsaken her ! Petrified ! amazed ! she stands senseless before the abyss of wretchedness which encompasses her ; all around is darkness, there is no glimmer of hope, he is gone, for ever gone, for whom alone she lived, and now to her the whole world is a vacuum ; though amidst a thousand admirers she feels alone, and for ever deserted ! Thus blinded, thus impelled by this heart-rending grief, she plunges into a watery grave. And such, Albert, such is the history of several characters ; and pray is not the case parallel with that of sickness ? Nature could find no other way for her escape, her powers were exhausted, she was incapable of contending with increasing ills, and death was the result. Shame on that man who can listen to this affecting case, and yet exclaim, ‘ Weak maid ! why did not she wait till time had removed this impression ? this despondency might have been alleviated, she might have found another lover who would have made her happy.’ As well might he say, ‘ A simpleton ! he died of a fever ; why did not he wait till his blood was cool, till his strength was restored ? then all would have been well, and he would now have been alive ! ’ ”

Albert, disallowing the justice of this comparison, still made many objections ; among the rest, that I had only instanced the case of a simple, ignorant girl. He could not conceive how a man of sense

✓ and education, whose views are more enlarged, and who can, consequently, find so many sources of consolation, could ever be guilty of suicide. "My good sir," I replied, "whatever may be the sense and education of a man, he is still a man and the reason he possesses has little or no effect when the passions take vent, or rather when the boundaries of human nature close in upon him; besides—but no more at present; we shall resume the subject another time:" saying which, I abruptly took my leave. Alas! my heart was full; we parted without a mutual comprehension. How seldom do men understand each other!

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## LETTER XXXII.

*August 15.*

WITHOUT doubt it is a similarity of taste and sentiment which renders mankind essential to each other. Charlotte, I am convinced, will feel some regret at my departure; and as to the children, they every day anxiously request me to come again on the morrow. I paid them a visit this afternoon, in order to tune Charlotte's harpsichord. The moment I entered I was surrounded by all the children, who eagerly entreated me to tell them a story.

It was Charlotte's wish that I should indulge them ; so having cut their evening's bread for them, which they accepted from my hands as cheerfully as if Charlotte had given it, I told them my best tale of " Henry and Peter ; or, the Effects of Presumption and Inexperience." I have derived considerable improvement from this kind of exercise, and it is astonishing the impression which those little tales make on the minds of children. If, on the repetition of an old story, I omit any incident, or introduce another, the little rogues immediately remark that it was not so the first time I told it ; I am, therefore, more uniform and exact, and even endeavour, as much as possible, to preserve the same tone of voice. I am hereby convinced that an author may injure his work by revising the next edition, and even altering it for the better. The first impression is readily imbibed, and, whether reason or credulity preponderate, must be the longest remembered. Whoever, then, attempts to eradicate a former impression, will meet with but little success.

## LETTER XXXIII.

*August 18.*

Is it possible that the very circumstances which at first combined to constitute man's happiness, can afterwards become the cause of misery? That ardent love for nature with which my bosom was formerly animated, which afforded joy beyond expression, and raised an imaginary paradise around me, is now become a most intolerable pain, a seeming demon, which pursues and perpetually torments me. With what delight did I formerly contemplate, from the summit of the towering rock, the extensive river, which, as far as eye could reach, watered the fertile plain! Then everything put forth, grew, and was expanded. All within my view appeared in motion. The mountains were covered to their very tops with high and tufted trees, and all the valleys in their various windings sheltered by delightful woods; the gentle stream glided through the trembling rocks, reflecting in its calm surface the light clouds which hung in the air, suspended by a soft zephyr. I heard the notes of the feathered songsters which enlivened the woods; I saw innumerable animalcules dancing in the purple rays of the sun, and when evening invited the humming grasshoppers abroad, the noise

of these insects won my most serious attention. The arid rock cherished the moss, and the sands beneath were covered with broom. That enlivening heat which animates all nature glowed around me—it filled and warmed my heart; I felt within a secret, inexpressible joy, and was lost in the idea of infinity! Stupendous mountains lifted their heads far above mine, rugged precipices lay near my feet, torrents rolled by my side, impetuous rivers ran through the plain, the rocks and hills echoed every distant sound, and in the depths of the earth numerous powers were in motion, and multiplying without end! All created beings, of various tribes, of various shapes, move upon the earth and in the air, while man takes shelter in his little hut, peeps out, and vauntingly exclaims, “I am lord of this vast world!” Weak mortal! to thee everything appears little, for thou art little thyself! Rugged mountains, untrodden deserts, the secret confines of the immense ocean, all are animated by the breath of the Eternal, and every atom which has derived existence and life from Him finds favour in His sight. Oh, how oft during these hours of contemplation has the cormorant’s flight, while passing over my head, inspired me with the wish of traversing the immeasurable extent of space, of transporting myself to distant regions; there to drink of the fountain of eternal joy, and to taste, if but for a

*Pass  
Hess*

moment, mortal as I am, of the beatitude of that Immortal, "in whom we live and move, and have our being!"

Oh, my friend! the bare recollection of these times is still some consolation; but when my ardent mind recalls those sensations, from which I derive the powers of expression, I rise superior to myself, and all my present wretchedness is doubly felt. The curtain falls, the scene is changed; instead of the bright prospect of eternal life, there is nothing in view but a bottomless pit! Can we say of anything that it *is*, when all passes away? when time, in its rapid progress, hurries everything away, and our transient life, carried along by the torrent, is either swallowed up by the furious waves, or dashed to pieces against the rocks? Every moment tends to destroy me, and all around me; and every moment I am myself a destroyer! Every innocent walk puts to death thousands of inoffensive insects: at one step the curious fabric of the industrious emmet is destroyed, and a little world is thereby rendered a mere chaos. Ah, my friend! they are not the great and extraordinary calamities of the world, the inundations which drown whole villages, the earthquakes which swallow up whole towns, that so sensibly move and affect me! No! What preys upon my spirits is that secret, that destructive power which prevails in all the works of nature—

Principle  
of De  
struction  
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Nature  
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self

her very master-pieces contain the principles of their own dissolution ; she has produced nothing which does not consume itself, and everything adjoining ; therefore, though surrounded by earth, and air, and all their innumerable active powers, I wonder, with a sorrowful heart, I see no happiness ; the whole world I think a terrific monster continually employed in devouring and regorging !

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## LETTER XXXIV.

*August 21.*

IN vain I stretch out my arms to embrace her, when I awake in the morning, after the unpropitious dreams of night ; in vain I seek her, when deceived by a flattering vision, which has placed me by her side, in the meadows where I have held her hand, and impressed on it a thousand kisses. Alas ! when half asleep, I fondly imagine that I touch her ; but when I awake entirely, tears gush from my eyes in copious streams, and my full heart heaves with sorrow. Destitute of all hope, I give way to despondency, and anticipate every evil.

## LETTER XXXV.

*August 22.*

How lamentable is my situation! my active powers have degenerated into passive indolence! I cannot bear idleness, and yet am capable of no employment; I am unable to think—reflection heightens my malady; I am insensible to the beauties of nature, and books are no longer entertaining. There is but one object which rules my mind, everything else abandons me. Sometimes I wish myself a mechanic, that, when I awake with the morning, I might have some employment to divert the tedious day, and dissipate my gloomy thoughts. How often do I envy Albert, when poring over his papers and parchments; how often do I think that if I were in his place I should be happy. Ha! *in his place!* I should be happy indeed; then Charlotte—— But no more of that. I have frequently taken up the pen to supplicate the minister for the place which my friend thinks I might have if I pleased. Indeed, from his repeated kindnesses, and intimation to serve me, I should have little doubts of the success of my application; and there are many situations, I know, in his disposal, which would not require much fatigue; but then, on further consideration,

the fable of the horse occurs, who, having submitted to the bridle and saddle, had soon cause to repent the sacrifice of liberty. I am ignorant what course to take ; I know the instability of my disposition, and, though not naturally inclined to change, am fully persuaded that, in my present situation, I can think of nothing but love.

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## LETTER XXXVI.

*August 28.*

COULD any cure be found for my present indisposition, these worthy people would certainly administer it. This, my friend, is my ill-fated birthday, and, as soon as I rose in the morning, I received a small parcel from Albert : it was directed by the hand of Charlotte, and on opening it I found the very ribbon—a pale pink knot—which she wore the first time I saw her, and which I have since repeatedly requested her to give me as a token of esteem. Albert had enclosed two pocket volumes of Homer, which I have often wished for, the edition which I have being too inconvenient to carry about when I walk. How they endeavour to please ! how far superior are those little tokens of friendship to the splendid gifts of the great.

which are always humiliating ! I ardently pressed the ribbon to my lips, which recalled those happy days which never can return ! Ah me ! what an alteration since that time ; but I will not murmur. The sweetest flowers of life fade as soon as they blossom. Some perish ere they have attained maturity, and leave not a single trace behind ; how few even bring forth fruit, and when they do, how rarely that fruit ever ripens ! Even then the little which is ripe is, alas ! too often neglected, and suffered to decay. Some allowance must be made for the difference of seasons—they are indeed as changeable as ourselves.—Adieu ! The weather is now delightful, it is truly summer ! I often visit Charlotte's orchard, where I climb up into a tree and pull some pears for her, while she stands below and catches them in her apron.

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### LETTER XXXVII.

*August 30.*

UNFORTUNATE man as I am, how often I deceive myself, how often play the fool ! Why this unbounded passion ? I address no prayers but to Charlotte, she is all that my fancy pictures, and everything around me is disregarded but as it

relates to her. When she is present, how happy are my hours ! but when obliged to tear myself away, as is frequently the case when contemplating her beautiful figure, when listening to her melodious voice—— Oh, my friend, overcome with joy, my heart throbs, I become insensible, tears sometimes relieve me, and then—then I am under the painful necessity of leaving her ! I wander about the meadows, I ascend steep rocks, I rush through thickets, and tear myself to pieces with the brambles and thorns, thus abating my anguish by varying the scene. Sometimes, exhausted with fatigue and thirst, I “take the measure of an unmade grave.” Oft in a sequestered wood, in the dead of the night, before the silver beams of the moon, I lean against some curvated tree, and, from an absolute want of rest, there sleep till awoke by the golden rays of the sun. Oh, heavens ! a dungeon, chains, and sackcloth would be nothing to what I endure.—Adieu ! The grave alone can terminate my woes ; the grave, that peaceful home, which puts a period to all misery !

## LETTER XXXVIII.

*Sept. 3.*

YES, I will leave the place ; I was in doubt at first, but thanks to my friend for his kind advice, I am now resolved. For this fortnight past I have been determined to leave her presence ; but now I am fully determined. She is just gone to the town to visit a particular friend, and Albert—Albert is with her, and I shall quit this place immediately.

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## LETTER XXXIX.

*Sept. 10.*

ALAS, my friend ! what a dismal night I have endured ; but it is past, and I am now prepared for the worst—I shall see her no more ! No more ! Oh, that my friend were here, that I could now throw myself into his faithful arms, give vent to my full heart, and partake of his balmy sympathy ! I use my best exertions to keep up my spirits, I endeavour to resume my composure, and am waiting patiently for daylight, when (for I have ordered post-horses to be ready) I shall be far removed from this place. Charlotte is now at rest—little imagines that she

shall never, never see me again! I left her abruptly, and had sufficient resolution not to disclose my intention, though we had conversed together for near two hours. Oh! how intelligent, how sensible was her discourse! Albert had promised to meet me, with Charlotte, immediately after supper, in the garden. I was standing upon the terrace, beneath the shady chestnut trees, admiring the setting sun, which my eyes never quitted till he had retired. Here Charlotte and I have frequently been together—it was indeed a favourite spot of mine before I knew her—and the predilection which she discovered for it gave me no small pleasure in our early friendship; and, as our desires were similar, our attachment was reciprocal. The prospect from these chestnut trees is extensive, but I remember having already described them to you, particularly how high copses enclose the end, and how the walk through the adjoining wood becomes gradually dark, till it terminates in a recess of shady trees, forming a delightful gloomy solitude. I recollect the pleasing melancholy I felt the first time I entered this silent retreat; it was in the middle of the day, and probably was a secret foreboding that, at a future period, it might be the scene of both pleasure and pain.

Having passed about half an hour in painful

reflection on my departure and return, I heard them approaching the terrace; immediately I ran to meet them, and, trembling, took Charlotte's hand and kissed it. When we had reached the top of the terrace, we perceived the silver-mantled moon rising from behind the shrubs which adorn the mountain tops; and our conversation became general till we had reached the dark end of the avenue. Charlotte first entered this my favourite spot, and sat down. Albert took his seat by the side of her, and I by the other; but such was the perturbed state of my mind, that I could not sit at rest; I arose, stood before her, then walked backwards and forwards, and afterwards resumed my seat with the utmost emotion. Charlotte pointed out the striking effects of the moonlight at the end of the wood, whose modest brilliancy was heightened by the surrounding darkness of the place. The solemnity of this dreary scene agreed with my soul's sadness. Oh, my friend, it was exceedingly awful! Charlotte at length spoke: "Whenever I walk out by moonlight, I recall to mind all those who were once dear to me, and are now no more; I then become impressed with the thoughts of death and a future state. Yes," she continued, in accents which spoke the tenderness of her heart, "we shall undoubtedly live hereafter, but how, Werter? Shall we see one another? shall we

recollect one another? what do you think?" "Charlotte," I replied, holding out my hand to her with overflowing eyes, "we shall meet again, I trust, both here and hereafter." I could say no more. Oh! my friend, it was a cruel question, at the very time when the thoughts of a long separation were preying upon my spirits. "Ah!" continued Charlotte, "I wonder if those persons whom we have loved, and whose memories we still revere, I wonder if in their blissful state they are sensible of our regard, and the happy moments we have enjoyed together; methinks the shade of my dear mother hovers around me, when, in a calm evening, I sit with those innocent children she left behind—sweet emblems of herself!—when eagerly they assemble about me, as they did about her; then do I raise my eyes to heaven, then do I pray that from her celestial abode she may look down and see the promise I made to her in her last moments, of being a mother to them, duly fulfilled. Oft and oft have I exclaimed, 'Oh, dearest of mothers, forgive me if I am not to them all that you were! Alas, I could not be all that she was; but all that I can be, I am!—they are properly clothed and fed, and, what is more, they are tenderly beloved and carefully instructed. Oh! could but my dear mother witness the harmony which now subsists among us, she would return devout thanks to that

Divine Being, to whom, when dying, she addressed such fervent prayers for our prosperity." More than this she uttered; but vain would be the attempt to repeat every noble sentiment. The animated effusions of genius are not to be expressed by cold pedantic characters.

Albert, with much tenderness, now interrupted her. "My lovely Charlotte, you suffer yourself to be too much affected. These recollections are tender and pleasing, but I beseech you not to dwell too much upon them. "Oh, Albert," she replied, "you must feelingly remember those tranquil evenings when, my father being abroad and the children retired to rest, we three used to sit round our little table. In general you had a book in your hand, to which you little attended, for who would not have preferred the instructive conversation of that intelligent woman to the most entertaining volume? She was as mild as she was benignant, and cheerful and happy amidst her domestic employments. Heaven has been witness how often I have kneeled and implored the divine assistance, to render me, if not altogether, somewhat like her in goodness."

Throwing myself at her feet, and seizing her hand, which I bathed with tears, I exclaimed, "Oh, Charlotte, Charlotte! the blessings of heaven and of your mother still attend." "Oh, Werter,"

she said, pressing my hand, which, like hers, was wet with tears, "had you but known her, for she was worthy of even your friendship." I was motionless. I never before received a compliment which I felt more forcibly. "And this worthy woman," she continued, "died in the very prime of life—her youngest child was scarcely six months old. During her illness, which was but of a short duration, she was calm and resigned, her only anxiety was about her family, particularly the youngest child. When she found the hour of her dissolution approaching, she desired me to bring them to her. I obeyed—the sweet little group surrounded her bed—the young ones insensible of the loss which they were about to sustain, but the old ones overwhelmed with unfeigned sorrow. Then raising her feeble hands to heaven, she fervently invoked the Almighty to be their *father*, kissed them alternately, dismissed them, and said to me, 'Charlotte, be thou their mother.' I gave my hand in silent assurance of my intention to obey. 'You promise much, my child—a mother's tenderness, a mother's attention—but your filial love assures me you are equally susceptible of maternal feeling. Be as affectionate to your brothers and sisters as you have been to me; be dutiful to your father; supply the place of a faithful wife; and be the comfort of his declining

years.' She then inquired for her husband, but, too sensible of the treasure he was about to lose, he had retired to weep in secret, and give vent to his heart-rending anguish. Albert, you were in my mother's chamber at this time ; she heard you move, and inquiring who it was, entreated you to come near her ; then looking at us both with much composure and apparent satisfaction, she exclaimed, ' You will be happy together, I see you will be happy.' " Albert now interrupting her with a cordial embrace, exclaimed, " Yes, my dear Charlotte, we *are* and *shall* be happy ! " Even he, the inanimate, studious Albert, was moved with her affecting description, and as for me, I was almost bereft of my senses. " And oh, Werter, this worthy, this truly amiable woman," she continued, " was torn away from her family. Good heaven ! must we thus be separated from those we hold most dear ? Methinks I now hear the melancholy lamentations of the poor little children, who for some time mourned the departure of their fond parent, and said that *black men* had carried away their dearest mother."

Charlotte now quitted her seat. I was also roused, but continued to sit, still holding her hand. " We must go," she cried, " it is late," and attempted to withdraw, but I grasped her hand still closer. " We shall see one another again," I

exclaimed, "we shall meet one another again. Yes, be our situation, be our from whatever they may, we shall see and know each other hereafter. I am going, and, as I must go, I go willingly; but I cannot say *for ever*—it would break my heart! Farewell, Charlotte; Albert, farewell! We shall see one another again." "Yes, to-morrow, I suppose," added Charlotte, smiling. Oh, my friend, that *to-morrow* was a dagger to my heart! Ah, me! she scarcely knew when to withdraw her hand. They went down the avenue. I immediately arose, and my eyes followed them by the light of the moon; I then prostrated myself on the ground, and gave vent to my strong emotions. At length, suddenly starting up, I ran to the terrace, and under the shade of the lime-trees could still discern her white gown waving near the garden gate. I stretched out my arms, but in vain; she was gone—the charmer vanished in a moment.

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## LETTER XL.

October 20.

I ARRIVED here last night, and, according to promise, write to my friend as soon as possible. The Ambassador is confined with the gout, and this

indisposition by no means adds to the *natural sweetness* of his temper. He is at all times morose and disagreeable, but now more peevish than ever. I see, too plainly, that fate has reserved me for severe trials, but I will not be discouraged nor dismayed. I shall study a little levity. I cannot forbear smiling at the word which has just escaped my pen; a little of that *levity*, of which at present I am totally destitute, would render me the happiest of men. But shall I despair of my faculties and the gifts of nature, when I perceive others of inferior talents and strength parading before me, with all the empty pride of the peacock, and with nothing else to be proud of but their gaudy plumage? Almighty heaven! why hast thou not united with the qualities thou hast given me those of confidence and self-complacency? But, patience!—methinks my friend exclaims—patience, good Werter! time can work miracles and things may change. Indeed, I must acknowledge my friend has judged right, for since I have been obliged to mix with company, since I have had an opportunity of observing their plans, their conduct, and their conversation, I am become far more easy and contented. As we naturally compare ourselves with the several objects we meet with in life, our joy or grief evidently proceeds from whatever is present. Solitude is the nurse of melancholy, in which fancy, ever

inclined to soar on high with daring wings, feeds on such visionary ideas, and creates such unexisting beings, that we look upon ourselves, in comparison, as inferior and insignificant. All things seem of greater importance than they are, and those appear our superiors who are not. This operation of the mind is natural; we are for ever finding imperfections in ourselves, for ever finding qualifications in others which they do not possess, and thus we picture to ourselves a hero, who is, in fact, an imagined being, the offspring of our own creation.

On the other hand, when we direct our views to one point, and eagerly persevere in the course that we proposed, we frequently find, in spite of vexation and disappointment, that we have made a greater progress, though continually tacking, than others, with all the assistance of wind and tide; and the judgment we form of ourselves, by comparison, whether we be on a line with them, before, or behind them, will be just.

## LETTER XLI.

*November 10.*

EVERY day I think my situation more tolerable. I am continually employed, and the number of actors who surround me, the different characters they perform, and the variety of scenes which they afford, successively engage my attention. I am become acquainted with the Count —— who every day increases in my esteem. He is a man of brilliancy and penetration, and though of superior abilities, is by no means reserved and phlegmatic. He is possessed of cheerfulness, gentleness, but above all, sensibility. The first time we met, which was in consequence of some business I had to transact with him, he conceived a regard for me, and perceiving that we understood each other, laid aside all formal ceremony, and became agreeably familiar. I was much pleased with his ingenuity, his inexpressible affability. The unreserved confidence of a great mind, like his, always tends to alleviate the pungent feelings of a heart like mine ; you, my friend, have been long acquainted with that heart, and will, I am certain, make every allowance for its failings.

## LETTER XLII.

*December 24.*

IT is as I suspected—the Ambassador and I can by no means agree. He is, without doubt, the most fastidious blockhead I ever met, as fantastical and formal as an old maid. As he is never pleased with himself, how is it possible he can be pleased with others? I wish to transact business regularly, and with despatch; and when it is finished, to have done with it, but this is not his way. When presented with a draft, he will return it, with, “To be sure it will do, but you had better revise it, there may be something to correct, you may think of a more appropriate phrase, or a more striking word.” My patience is then exhausted, and I curse both him and his observations. Not a conjunction, not one trifling particle, must be omitted, and those transpositions—my favourite style of writing—he cannot bear. Every sentiment must be agreeable to the dogmatic mode of office, or it is immediately disapproved of; you, my friend, who know my aversion to those rigid rules, must easily conceive the torment I endure with such a character.

Were it not for the count's agreeable acquaintance, I should be quite inconsolable. He candidly

assured me the other day how much he detested this *great man's* tardiness and circumspection. "Such characters," he observed, "not only render everything troublesome to themselves, but to everybody else who is concerned with them. But," added he, "we must submit to such people, like the traveller who is obliged to ascend a mountain; if the mountain were not in the way, his road would certainly be shorter and more agreeable, but as it is he must patiently pass over it." The old fool sees that the count is attached to me, and this tends to increase his chagrin; he takes every opportunity to depreciate him in my presence; I naturally engage in his defence, and consequently add to his displeasure. Yesterday, I observed that one of his blows against this gentleman was also intended to hit me. "The count," said he, may do very well for the common affairs of the world, his style is good, and he writes with facility; but, like other *great geniuses*, his learning is only superficial." This was delivered in a peculiar tone of voice, accompanied with a significant look, that implied, *I hope you feel what I say*. With respect to myself, however, the sarcasm has no sting—I despise the man who can think and act as he does; and who would argue with such wretches? However, I replied with some degree of warmth, that the count was a gentleman

entitled to every respect, both for his demeanour and understanding, that, in fact, he was the only person I had ever met with, who, being superior to the generality of mankind for his extensive genius, possessed all the necessary promptness for business. This was algebra in his opinion, and lest any further invectives against a character so far superior to his should increase my resentment, I immediately withdrew.

You, my friend, you I may thank for this, my present slavery. Through your repeated importunities and strong recommendations of activity, I consented to bend my neck to this galling yoke. Activity! If the man who plants potatoes and carries them to market be not a more active and useful being than I am, may I labour ten years longer at this cursed galley to which I am now chained. And what vexation—what disgusting lassitude prevail among fashionable societies!—how, through their ambition of rank, they watch and toil for precedency! Contemptible, selfish passion! which in every action they demonstrate. There is a lady here at present who is for ever deafening the company with pompous accounts of her family and extensive estates; were a stranger to hear her boasting, he would imagine she was some fool whose brain had been disordered by the unexpected possession of a title

or fortune ; and yet (which renders her still more ridiculous) she is no more than a steward's clerk in the neighbourhood ! It is wonderful how any human being can study to be so contemptible !

Every day, my friend, I perceive more and more the absurdity of judging of others by ourselves, since it is with difficulty that I can suppress the heats of my imagination and the emotions of my heart. I willingly leave others to pursue the paths they have chosen, and at the same time desire to follow my own inclinations. The ridiculous distinctions which prevail among citizens are what chiefly disgust me : I am perfectly aware that inequality of condition is absolutely necessary, and of the advantages I derive from it myself ; but I would not suffer it to oppose the small portion of pleasure which this world of pain affords.

During one of my late rambles I have become acquainted with a Miss Bouer—a very pleasant, agreeable girl, who, notwithstanding the formality and affectation of her neighbours, is easy and simple both in her behaviour and dress. When we first met, we were mutually pleased with each other, and before we parted, I requested permission to pay my respects to her at her house, which she granted with so much ingenuous politeness that I waited with impatience for a season—

able opportunity. She is not a native of this place, but at present resides here with her aunt, whose countenance is far from agreeable. I disliked the old lady the first moment I saw her, but, for the niece's sake, paid her every attention, and frequently addressed myself to her. In less than half an hour I nearly conjectured (what Miss has since confessed) that her aunt, who is far advanced in years, having little fortune, and less understanding, feels no other enjoyment than the secret satisfaction of enumerating her illustrious ancestors; her noble birth is her protection—this is the rampart with which she surrounds herself; and her chief amusement is to stand at her window and look down with sovereign contempt on all the supposed ignoble heads which pass under it. In her early days she was reckoned handsome; but the prime of life was idly lavished away, and many a youth was the sport of her caprice—this was her *golden age*! On the decay of beauty, she was obliged to accept of an old officer, and become subservient to his morose humour—this was her *brazen age*! She is now a widow, neglected, and, were it not for the amiable disposition of her niece, would be entirely abandoned—this may be called her *iron age*!

## LETTER XLIII.

*Jan. 8, 1772.*

WHAT characters are here!—their continual study is the science of forms! All their time and thoughts are employed for a whole year in, perhaps, a matter of no greater consequence than how they may advance nearer to the upper end of the table by only one chair! such people are far from being idle, for they are perpetually adding to their labour by bestowing on mere trifles that attention which should be directed to more important business. Some day last week a grand party, which had been formed for an excursion upon the ice in sledges, was abruptly dissolved, owing to a trifling dispute which arose about precedence! Cannot the fools perceive that it is not rank which constitutes true happiness? he who possesses the highest situation is frequently the most insignificant actor; many a king is governed by his minister, and many a minister by his secretary. Who, in such cases, should be esteemed the prime agent? He, certainly, whose superiority of merit is capable of rendering the passions and power of others subservient to his own will.

Will &  
how

## LETTER XLIV.

*Jan. 20.*

I NOW address my dear Charlotte while resident in a humble cottage, which has afforded me a comfortable shelter from a merciless and violent storm. During my abode in that melancholy town of D——, among strangers, strangers indeed to my disposition and feelings, I could never write to you ; but the moment I entered this secluded place, whilst the snow and hail were beating against my little window, I was restored to you and to myself. On my very first entrance, your image rushed before my eyes, and the remembrance of Charlotte filled my heart. Oh, sacred remembrance ! sweet recollection ! Gracious powers ! that the first moment I beheld her could be restored !

Ah, Charlotte ! couldst thou but see me in that vortex in which I have been involved, where everything disturbs, but nothing touches me : apathy seizes me, and I no longer enjoy that inward satisfaction which is derived from real pleasure ; I never shed the tear of sensibility or sympathy, the fermentation is dried up ; I stand motionless, as one thunderstruck at a raree show ; great and little puppets move before my eyes, and I frequently ask myself if the whole be not a visual deception : these

puppets become the objects of my diversion, or rather I become the object of theirs. I take hold of my neighbour's hand, I find it a composition of wood, and then, full of horror, withdraw my own ! At night I intend to enjoy the sun-rise of the succeeding morning ; but in vain, I cannot quit my bed. In the morning I propose to take a walk when it is moonlight, but I cannot quit my chamber. I can give no reason why I rise, or why I go to bed. The thoughts which charm me at night, and rouse me in the morning, speedily vanish.

I have found but one being (a Miss Bouer) who is of the same description of yourself—yes, Charlotte, she is certainly like you, if it be possible that any one can be. “Ah !” you will exclaim, “he has learned to pay elegant compliments !”—but the remark is just. I have been exceedingly polite of late, not being able to be anything better ; the ladies say that I possess no small share of wit too, and that I excel everybody in flattery—“In *lies*, too,” you will add, for the one always accompanies the other. But I intended to say something of Miss Bouer : she possesses considerable sensibility, and a superior degree of understanding, both of which are apparent in her fine blue eyes. Her rank is a burden to her, for she has no inclination which it gratifies ; she despises all the emptiness of

high life, and we frequently entertain one another for hours together in conversing of the pleasures and happiness of rural scenes ; we think of you in our discourse, for Miss B. not only knows but respects you, a voluntary respect, not excited ; she admires you, and is always pleased when your name is mentioned.

Oh, that I were now present with you in that favourite little apartment where your dear little sisters and brothers used to play around us ! If they were troublesome to you, I would tell them a story, and they would then surround me with eagerness and attention.

The sun has almost retired ; his setting rays now glisten on the snow which covers the whole country ; the storm has subsided, and I must return to my dungeon. Adieu ! Is Albert with you ? What is he to you now ? Fool that I am, why should I ask such a question ?

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## LETTER XLV.

*Feb. 17.*

It does not seem likely that the ambassador and I can continue much longer together, he is absolutely intolerable ; his mode of transacting business is so exceedingly absurd that I cannot refrain from

contradicting him, and following my own inclinations, in spite of all his directions, which of course offends him. He has hinted something of this to the minister, from whom I have received a reprimand. It was written in gentle terms, but still it was a reprimand. I had resolved on giving in my resignation, when I received a private letter from the same person, which, I confess, humbled me, and excited my admiration of the profound and exalted genius which dictated it; it contained the most noble sentiments to soothe my painful sensibility, and with extreme candour and condescension expresses much approbation of my schemes, and no small commendation of that firmness and ardour which naturally belong to youth. He exhorts me not to suppress this impetuosity, but to keep it within due bounds, that it may assist my abilities. Thus am I reconciled to myself, and instructed to be patient, at least a few days longer. Tranquillity and peace of mind are blessings, my friend, but, valuable as they are, they are also transitory!

## LETTER XLVI.

*Feb. 20.*

MAY Heaven protect my dear friends, and bestow upon them all those blessings of life which have been denied to me; Albert, I thank thee sincerely for thy generous deception. I expected to have been informed of the nuptials, and intended on that day (happy day for thee) to have taken down Charlotte's profile from the wall, and to have buried it with some other papers. You are now united, and her picture still remains there, and there let it remain! why should it not? Can she not still find room for me in her heart? Yes, Albert, with thy permission I may have a second place there, nay, I *must*! Should she forget me, I should run distracted. Oh, happy husband! I am already distracted; but *be* happy, Albert! and Charlotte, angelic creature, may thou be the happiest of thy sex!

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## LETTER XLVII.

*March 15.*

A STRANGE adventure has just happened, which will doubtless prevent my longer continuance here. My patience is exhausted, insupportable! There is

no remedy ; my friend, too, is the cause of all ; you, who importuned and urged me to accept a situation for which I am by no means capacitated, I am now convinced, so will you be ; but, lest my failure may be attributed to the violence of my temper, this shall be accompanied with a circumstantial detail of the business.

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### LETTER XLVIII.

I HAVE already and repeatedly mentioned the count's esteem and partiality for me. I dined with him yesterday, which was the day when all personages of rank were to meet at his house. I never recollected the assembly nor the exclusion of subalterns on that occasion. After dinner we went into the hall, conversed and walked about together. Colonel B., having also paid the count a visit, joined in our conversation, and thus we passed the time till the nobility entered. Heaven knows I was wholly unprepared when the *most noble* and *right honourable* Lady S. made her appearance, accompanied with her husband and daughter (a mere simpleton, with a *short* waist and flat bosom), who with contemptuous look and supercilious air passed by me. Despising all such, I was determined to quit the place, and only

waited to take my leave of the count, who was now engaged in idle, frothy compliments. At this moment Miss Bouer entered, and as her presence has always afforded me pleasure I delayed awhile to speak to her. I was leaning over the back of her chair, and at last discovered (which at first I did not perceive) a certain confusion, which rendered her less affable and agreeable; this sudden change excited my astonishment. "Is it possible!" I thought; "can *she* be like the rest?" I was displeased, and would have withdrawn, but that I was anxious to inquire into the cause. The rest of the company were now arrived: there was a certain baron in his old favourite coat, and a count, whose antiquated habit made no inconsiderable contrast to the fashions of the day. I addressed all those whom I knew, and remarked that they were peculiarly distant; but I was more surprised at Miss Bouer's behaviour. This, indeed, engaged all my attention; nor was I aware (as I have since been informed) that the ladies were all whispering together—which whispers soon buzzed among the gentlemen; and Madam S. had, it seems, some warm conversation with the count upon the subject. At last the count took me aside, and with much good humour said, "You know the folly of etiquette; there are some here take your presence in dudgeon. I should be exceedingly sorry"—"I

beg pardon, I should have recollected myself ; but your goodness will, I trust, excuse this oversight. It was indeed my intention to have departed long ago, but my evil genius prevented me." Saying this, I smiled, bowed, and took my leave, which was accompanied with a cordial shake of his hand, that sufficiently spoke his honest heart. I also made a bow to the *honourable* company, then hastened into my chaise, and drove to a neighbouring village, where, from the summit of a hill, I contemplated the setting sun, and amused myself awhile with Homer, having accidentally turned to the beautiful description of the hospitable reception of the King of Ithaca by the honest herdsmen. After thus enjoying myself I returned, and, on entering the supper-room at night, met with only a few persons who were entertaining themselves with dice. I was immediately accosted by the *good-natured* Adelheim, who, in a whisper, said, "It was a very disagreeable affair which happened to you ; so the count obliged you to leave the company !" "The company !" I replied ; "I was very happy to leave *them*." Thus it is. The only thing which vexes me is the impertinent report which is spread. I then began to think seriously of it, imagining all the while I was at table that every one was looking at me on account of what had passed. This stung me to the heart ; and now wherever I go I hear

myself pitied, while my triumphant enemies exclaim, "Thus it ever happens to all those vain insignificant mortals who affect to despise rank, and yet are always studying to render themselves conspicuous." Oh ! I could rip up my heart. Fortitude must be very essential in philosophy, though trifles in general meet with our derision, yet when productive of disagreeable consequences they become serious ; and when taken advantage of by masked villainy, the source of mortification.

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## LETTER XLIX.

*March 15:*

EVERYTHING that happens tends to increase my vexation. Having this day met Miss Bouer, I joined her on purpose to inquire the cause of her late behaviour. "Ah, Werter !" she said, with much energy ; "you who are acquainted with my heart must be conscious how much I endured on your account when first I entered the room. I foresaw the consequence of your presence there, and wished for an opportunity of revealing to you my fears. But I was well convinced that there were some who would immediately quit the assembly if you remained. The count was exceedingly hurt,

but he could not possibly disoblige the company—then the noise it has since made.” Endeavouring to conceal my strong emotion, I inquired, what noise? “Ah,” she replied, with tears in her eyes, “how much trouble it has already given me!” This voluntary mark of her sympathy and affection not only calmed my indignation, but consoled my heart. I was near prostrating myself at my fair advocate’s feet. “Be explicit,” I cried; her tears were more abundant. “Ah, sir,” she continued, “my aunt—you know her disposition—she was present; and, good heaven! how vague are all her notions; yet she can boast of her knowledge of life, of her experience, her sense of equity, of breeding. Oh, Werter! Werter! how did she lecture me both last night and this morning on our acquaintance. How much did she endeavour to depreciate you, while I did not dare to utter one word in your defence!” Every word was a dagger to my heart; but, amiable soul! she was not conscious that in pity to me she should have concealed all that she had told. She likewise informed me of the idle reports which busy impertinence had propagated and malicious calumny had improved. I have been ever since so agonised that I have more than once seized my sword to give vent to my full heart! I have read of some spirited steeds who, to relieve themselves from the effect of a heated

course, will with their teeth instinctively open a vein. Oft am I tempted to open one of mine, and thus procure everlasting relief.

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## LETTER L.

*March 24.*

I HAVE written to Court for permission to resign, and trust it will not be denied to me. You must pardon me for not having asked your advice, but my departure hence is indispensable. I know you would fain dissuade me from my purpose, but in vain are all arguments. Pray be so kind to break this to my mother with due precaution. As I am incapable of doing anything for myself, it cannot be expected that I can render any service to others. She will, I know, be sorry—very sorry, to hear that her son has stepped short in that career, which by degrees would have raised him to the rank of a privy-counsellor or ambassador. You may argue as much as you please, and urge the most powerful reasons for my stay, but in vain. I am determined on going. But that you may know where I am going to, I must inform you that the Prince of —— is here, and, having heard of my intention to resign, has kindly given me an

invitation to reside during the spring month at his country house. He has promised that I shall follow my own inclinations; and I daresay, as we agree on all subjects but one, that I shall accompany him; but should I change my mind, my friend shall be duly apprised of it.

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## LETTER LI.

*April 19.*

I THANK my friend for his two consolatory letters. I waited for my answer from Court before I wrote to you. I much dreaded that my mother would have interfered in the business, and disappointed my hope of dismissal; but it is all settled, and I have this moment received it. I shall not tell you with what reluctance the Ambassador granted it, nor what his letter contained upon the subject, as it might only add to your complaints. The hereditary Prince has made me a present of twenty-five ducats, accompanied with such tender expressions as almost melted me into tears; the money, therefore, for which I lately applied to my mother is not now required.

LETTER LII.

*May 5.*

TO-MORROW I shall set out, and as the place of my nativity is but six miles out of the road I may probably pay it a visit, in order to call to remembrance the happy hours of my infancy. I shall enter at the same gate through which I passed with my mother, when, after my father's decease, she quitted that delightful residence for the detested town. Adieu, my dear friend. My next shall contain a faithful account of my excursion.

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LETTER LIII.

WITH all the devotion of a pilgrim I performed the journey to my native soil, when a retrospect of scenes well-remembered filled me with sensations not to be expressed. As soon as I approached the large lime-tree which stands about a quarter of a league from the village, I alighted from my carriage and ordered the postillion to drive on before me, that, in solitary and pedestrian contemplation, I might more comfortably enjoy the pleasures of recollection. I stopped beneath that lime-tree, which had been generally the period of

my early walks : what strange vicissitudes have been since ! In those happy, ignorant days, I languished after a world I did not know, but which I fondly flattered myself was decked with the most delightful flowers, and contained every enjoyment that youth could desire ; but now that I have visited the world, what, my dear friend, have I experienced ? What but the very reverse of all those fascinating scenes which youthful fancy had suggested ? I now beheld those opposite mountains, which well I remember have oft excited the wish of peregrination : for hours together I used to sit looking at them, ardently longing to be among those thick woods and valleys, which render the prospect so delightfully variegated, and when these hours of amusement were over, when obliged to return home, with how much regret did I quit this favourite spot ! On approaching the village I recognised those several little gardens and summer-houses with which in my early days I had been well acquainted ; but I could not bear the new ones, nor, indeed, any of the alterations which have been since made. On entering the village through the gate, I once more felt myself at home. It is impossible, my dear friend, minutely to relate the several affecting circumstances of this visit, nor, indeed, would a detail of them be interesting to you, though to me

they were extremely so, through pleasing recollection. It was my intention to have lodged in the market-place, near our old house, but when I went there I found that the school-room, which had formerly been tenanted by a worthy old lady, was now converted into a chandler's shop. I recollected the many anxieties, the many tears I had shed in that confinement. Some particular impression marked every succeeding step. No pilgrim in the Holy Land was ever attracted with so many vestiges, or ever testified so much devotion. Of the thousand sensations I felt, I cannot refrain from mentioning one. Having followed the course of a little brook to that farm which had formerly been my favourite ramble, and where I and other boys used to amuse ourselves with bathing, and making ducks and drakes upon the water, I was most forcibly struck with the recollection of what I then was—painful recollection! Well I remember how oft I looked at the water as it flowed, how oft I formed romantic notions of the several different countries it was going to pass, till my imagination was exhausted, and, during the continual flowing of the water, my mind bewildered in the contemplation of unknown distance. Exactly such, my friend, were the sentiments of our great ancestors, and sure the language of Ulysses, when he talks of the immeasurable ocean

and the unlimited earth, as well suits the shallow comprehension of man as that of the pedantic youth, who assumes all the gravity of a philosopher, because he has learned at school that the earth is round. Finding my fancies still afloat, and that my ideas, thus excited, were not likely to terminate, I suddenly prepared for my return, and, having entered my carriage, took my departure, sensibly impressed with past joys and succeeding sorrows.

At present, my dear friend, I am with the prince at one of his lodges. He is a man of extreme candour and generosity, and I feel myself quite at home in his company. The only disagreeable trait in his character is credulity, for he is too apt to speak from report, and to offer his affirmations without either experience or investigation. I am sorry to say that he seems more to value my abilities and external accomplishments than my judgment and mental endowments, which are, in fact, my only pride, being alone the source of all my industry, my happiness, misery, everything ; which are alone my own, and which constitute every good quality I boast, yet I do not pretend to any superiority of knowledge.

## LETTER LIV.

*May 25.*

I HAD projected a scheme which I did not intend to acquaint my friend with till it was performed ; but the design having been frustrated I shall now communicate it. I had, for this sometime, been fully resolved to go into the army, and this indeed was my chief motive for accepting the prince's invitation. He is a general in the service of the Elector of ———. During one of our late walks together I intimated to him this inclination, but it did not meet with his approbation, the success of which must solely have depended upon his interest, I thought it imprudent to make any objections to his.

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## LETTER LV.

*June 11.*

UNFORTUNATE wretch as I am, I can stay here no longer, for what can I do here ? I am tired of the place. Ah, my friend, I am indeed unhappy ! 'Tis true the prince treats me in all respects as his equal, but I cannot make him my confidant ; our minds are by no means congenial ; though his understanding be good it is far from extraordinary,

\* Note mingling of dislike of re-  
straint with personal in-  
fantation.

so that his conversation affords me no better entertainment than the perusal of a well-written volume. I shall only stay another week here, and then commence a strolling life as before. Some drawings have been my best performances since I came here. The prince has a taste for the arts, but it would be far more considerable were it not cramped by technical jargon and pedantic rules. My patience is frequently exhausted when, with elaborate criticisms (on which he values himself not a little), he impedes the progress of that lively expression which my glowing imagination bestows upon art and nature.

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### LETTER LVI.

*July 16.*

IN truth, my friend, I am no more than a traveller—a mere pilgrim in this life, and who is there in the world that is not?

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### LETTER LVII.

*July 18.*

WHAT is my present destination? You shall hear. I am obliged to remain here a fortnight longer, then I intend to visit the mines of—, but it is

impossible ; indeed, my mind changes every hour, I deceive myself, my sole wish is to be near Charlotte, this is the fact ; alas ! I see the weakness of my heart, yet I am not its dupe, but willing slave, and readily obey its dictates.

## LETTER LVIII.

July 29.

OH, no ; 'tis better as it is ; 'tis all for the best—I her husband ! Had the Divine Power, which gave me existence, decreed for me also that blessing, the remainder of my happy life should have been devoted to ceaseless thanksgiving ; but I will not murmur against the will of Providence ; may these tears, these fruitless wishes be forgiven ! Had she been mine, oh ! with what pleasure would I have folded in my arms the most amiable of her sex ! How am I agitated when I see her heavenly frame encompassed by Albert !

I was about to remark—and wherefore not ?—that she would have been far happier with me than with Albert. He never was formed for her ; he wants that tender sensibility which she possesses and delights in ; he wants—in short, their hearts do not beat in unison. Oh ! my friend, how oft have I perceived, when reading to her some inter-

\* A phrase that might be applied to much of romantic literature Ch. Baer's Fiction

esting passage, that our sensations have been mutual, that we have thought and felt alike ; and by looks, more expressive than words, conveyed to each other our meaning ; yet Albert loves her, he studies to please her, and does not his love deserve a return ?

I have been interrupted by an unseasonable visit ; I have therefore endeavoured to compose myself, and my mind is at present more tranquil. Adieu, my dearest friend !

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### LETTER LIX.

I AM not the only wretch whose views of happiness are frustrated, this life is subject to disappointments. I have been to visit the good woman who lives upon the green near the lime-trees. The eldest boy ran to meet me, and his exclamations of joy brought out his mother ; but her countenance bespoke much sorrow. I inquired the cause of her dejection. “ Alas ! my good sir,” she replied, while tears streaming down her pallid cheeks interrupted her utterance, “ our poor little John, who was the joy and comfort of my heart, is now no more ! ”—this was her youngest child. I remained silent. “ And my husband,” she continued, “ has returned from Holland without any

money. He was taken ill of an ague, and, had it not been for the charitable donations of some humane beings, he must have begged upon the road." I was grieved at her story, and gave the little boy some money. She offered me a few apples; I accepted them, and took my leave with a heavy heart.

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LETTER LX.

Aug. 21.

As quick as lightning are the transitions of my mind, now a sudden ray of hope breaks in upon my drooping spirits, and a momentary gladness dawns within me; but alas! the gleam is transient. During its short-lived stay I begin to think, were Albert to die, that then—then Charlotte would—and I follow this illusion till I find myself on the brink of a precipice, when I start with such sudden horror, that were it a real precipice my fall would be inevitable. When I go out at the same gate, or take the same road, which conducted me, for the first time, towards Charlotte's residence, my heart sinks within me, and I begin with deep anguish to compare what I *was* with what I *am*. All happiness is past, the world no longer appears the same, my heart throbs not as formerly it did, I feel not the same delight as then. If, my friend, the shade

of a departed prince could return to visit the magnificent palaces, which in happy times he had erected and left to a beloved son, and were to find them overthrown by enemies and reduced to ruins, what would be his sensations? Such, alas, as mine!

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## LETTER LXI.

*Sept. 3.*

I AM frequently at a loss to comprehend how she can love another; how she presumes to love another, while she reigns alone in this heart, while her fair image engrosses every thought, and excludes every other idea.

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## LETTER LXII.

'Tis harvest time, Nature is gay, but all within me is gloomy as winter. When the leaves of the trees shall become yellow and fall off in autumn, then will the hair of my head be white and drop off by handfuls. My sight begins to fail me; I have almost lost my hearing, all my senses, except *feeling*, and that remains doubly acute. In a former letter\* I mentioned a country swain, whom I accidentally met with when I first came here. On inquiry, I

\* Letter X.

understood he had been dismissed from his service, and I could obtain no further information of him : but yesterday I happened to meet him in the road leading to the next village, when I accosted him with so much cordiality, that he soon made me acquainted with his lamentable story, lamentable indeed, as my friend will acknowledge when he reads it. Yet why trouble my friend with every circumstance that distresses me ? why distress him ? why incur his pity or his displeasure ? but it is my fate to render every one who knows me unhappy. At first he was somewhat reserved, but his usual candour returned, as if he had suddenly recollected me : he very ingenuously confessed his faults, and related his misfortunes. I wish I could convey his words with the accent and manner they were uttered, with all the wild emotion, the enthusiastic agitation of love, which had rendered him incapable of eating, drinking, or sleeping, which had also incapacitated him for business ; for whenever desired to do anything he immediately forgot it, and would do something quite contrary. He was continually upbraided and censured by his mistress, but he fancied the voice which chid him was melodious, and he was happy. Some evil spirit, he said, had haunted him, and prompted him at last to do what he should not have done. One day having followed, or rather, having been induced to follow, his mis-

tress into her chamber, and she having refused to comply with his entreaties, he was tempted (he knew not how) to gain her consent by gentle force. He swore his views had been always honourable; that marriage had been his wish, and that in that wish all his hopes of happiness had been centred. After some hesitation he confessed the liberties she had granted, and then, apprehending he had said too much, defended her conduct, and declared his love was as ardent as ever. His manners were so affecting, that no words can paint them, though still his image is before my eyes. Were you to see him you would pity and forgive him. I feel myself interested in his fate; but why should I endeavour to excite your compassion for him, when already you know one whose fate is similar?

I find, in looking over my letter, that I have omitted the conclusion of this young man's story.

During the lady's struggle her brother entered, whose antipathy to the lover was so great that he often wished him to be dismissed from his sister's service, for he feared if she married again she might have children of her own, and, consequently, his would be prevented from inheriting her fortune. The brother soon seized this opportunity of turning him out, and in consequence of the report which was spread, the lady could not possibly admit him again, without either marrying him or forfeiting

*Romantic  
story*

her reputation. Since (as the poor fellow informed me) she has taken another lad into her service, which has added to her brother's uneasiness, as it is rumoured that she means to marry him. Should this take place the young man declares his life would be a burden.

This ruling passion—this love is no poetical invention; even among the low and illiterate it may be found in all its native purity. Read this story, my friend, with peculiar attention. I am more composed since I have begun writing to you. You will see by my letter, which is longer than usual, that I am not so hasty as I was. I entreat you, then, to read it with attention, and think that in this story you also read that of your unhappy Werter—yes, it is, and will be ever the same with me; but, I am sorry to say, that in fortitude this young lover is so superior that I blush when I compare myself to him.

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### LETTER LXIII.

*Sept. 5.*

CHARLOTTE'S husband having been in the country for these some days, she began a letter to him thus: "My ever dear and beloved, return as soon as possible; you are expected with a thousand good

wishes." As soon as she had finished, a friend brought her word that very important business delayed Albert longer than he imagined ; of course she did not send the letter, and in the evening I happened by accident to take it up. Having read it with a smile of pleasure, I kissed it in a fit of transport. She inquired the cause : " Oh," I exclaimed, "what a blessing is imagination !" By my countenance she readily perceived the force of that imagination, for I fancied the letter had been addressed to myself. She was silent and looked displeased ; that look of displeasure silenced me.

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## LETTER LXIV.

*Sept. 6.*

You cannot conceive how reluctantly I have laid aside the blue frock, which I wore the first time I danced with Charlotte : it was impossible to wear it longer, it was so shabby ; but I have had another made exactly like it, with a buff waistcoat and breeches. I do not, however, admire the new coat so much as the original pattern. Alas ! it is not the same, but in time it may probably become equally attractive.

## LETTER LXV.

*Sept. 12.*

CHARLOTTE went for her husband, and has been absent for some time. I paid her a visit to-day, and had the ineffable pleasure of kissing her hand. A canary bird flew from the looking-glass upon her shoulder. "Here," said she, "is a new friend." She then enticed it to come into her hand. "See how fond he is of me; how he flutters his little wings, and pecks with his bill, whenever I give him victuals; pray, Werter, observe, he is absolutely kissing me." The little bird, on her offering him her lips, seemed delighted with her fragrant breath. "Now," said she, stretching the bird over to me; "he shall kiss you, too;" and accordingly he directed his little beak to my lips. What pleasing sensations did I then feel. "Charlotte, this little bird is not quite satisfied with our kisses; he wants more substantial gratification—he wants nourishment." She then took some bread, and fed him out of her mouth. I was obliged to turn aside. Alas! she should not rouse my feelings with such scenes; when my heart is lulled, she should let it rest, and not call it from oblivion to recollection—yet, has she not a right? but she confides in me too much; she is conscious that I love her.

## LETTER LXVI.

*Sept. 15.*

How mortifying to any man of reflection are those contemptible beings who, devoid of all sensibility, disregard everything that is interesting and worthy of attention. You must remember my mentioning the walnut-trees at S——, under which I sat with Charlotte at the worthy old vicar's. How did these lovely, these admired trees adorn the parsonage yard ! The shade produced by their venerable branches excited the most pleasing ideas, and recalled to recollection the worthy pastor who planted them. Oft has the schoolmaster mentioned the name of him (which he had learnt from his grandfather) who planted the first. "This vicar," he would say, "was a most excellent man, and, under these trees, his name was ever remembered with pleasure." This very schoolmaster informed me yesterday, with tears in his eyes, that they were cut down. "Cut down !" I exclaimed, "had I been present, I should certainly, in my rage, have murdered the audacious ruffian who aimed the first blow ; it is not to be endured : if I had been master of two such trees, and only one of them had perished with old age, I should have put on mourning." However, the whole village seems

concerned ; every one murmurs, and I hope the honest peasants will send no more presents to the vicar's wife, but make her rue the mischief she has done ; for it was *she* that gave the order, the wife of the present incumbent. The good old man haply fell before his trees, and none but a tall, ghastly, frightful creature, who, through continual indisposition, has little enjoyment of life, and therefore scorns the world, because the world scorns her ; none but an antiquated idiot, who affects learning, pretends to a knowledge of canonical books, and to assist in writing a *new moral and critical reformation of the Christian religion*, expressing the utmost contempt of Lavater's enthusiasm—none, I say, but such a wretch as this, could have cut down these walnut-trees ! Oh, my friend, I shall never forget them ; I can never forgive her ! But the absurd reason she gives for this wantonness increases my indignation ; the leaves, forsooth, which fell from them made the yard damp and dirty, the spreading branches intercepted the light, and the little boys throwing stones at the nuts affected her delicate nerves, and interrupted her profound meditations, while she was employed in weighing the respective merits of Kennicott, Semler, and Michaelis. When I perceived that her conduct had offended all the inhabitants of the place, particularly the veterans, I inquired of them how they came to permit it,

but their reply was, "Ah, my good sir, when the steward delivers his orders, what can poor peasants do?" One circumstance, however, has afforded me some satisfaction: the steward and the vicar expecting to reap some emolument from this woman's caprice, had privately agreed to divide the profits arising from these trees between them; but the revenue officer having been apprized of the business, took possession of them, and sold them to the best bidder; add to which, they are still lying on the ground. Oh, if I were some powerful prince, how would I punish the vicar, his wife, the steward, and the revenue officer! But no, no, my friend! had I been born a prince, I should never have enjoyed the felicity of Charlotte's company under those umbrageous trees, the fate of which I now so much lament.

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## LETTER LXVII.

*Oct. 10.*

To me it is supreme happiness only to behold her sparkling dark eyes. I am grieved, indeed, to find that Albert does not seem so happy as he expected to be, as I should have been if ——. I hate broken sentences, and yet I cannot otherwise express myself. Good heaven! and am I not sufficiently explicit?

## LETTER LXVIII.

*Oct. 12.*

OSSIAN has completely banished Homer from my heart and imagination; into what a world does this divine bard lead me! there to wander through heaths and wilds, surrounded by impetuous whirlwinds, to see by the feeble light of the moon the spirits of our beloved ancestors, to hear from the mountain tops, amidst the roaring of the waves, their plaintive sounds issuing from the deep caverns, and the sad lamentations of the love-sick maid, who heaves her last sigh over the mossy tomb of the hero by whom she was adored! I meet this bard, with silver hair, wandering in the valley, and seeking the footsteps of his fathers—their tombs, alas! are all he finds!—then contemplating the pale moon, as she sinks beneath the waves of the foaming deep, the recollection of times past occurs to the hero's mind, those times when the approach of danger gladdened his heart and invigorated his frame, when the moon shone upon his bark, then laden with his enemies' spoils, and lighted up with his triumph! When I read in his countenance the deepest sorrow, when I see his once dazzling glory sinking into the grave, when he casts a look on the cold clay which is to cover him, and exclaims, "The traveller, who has been

acquainted with my worth, will come and inquire for the heart-inspiring bard, the illustrious son of Fingal, he will walk over my tomb, but he will seek me in vain," then, oh then, my dear friend, I could seize the sword of some noble, valiant knight, and when I had rescued my prince from the tedious agonies of lingering life, plunge it into my own breast, that I might follow the demi-god whom I had liberated.

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## LETTER LXIX.

*Oct. 19.*

OH, the inexpressible, the fearful void which pervades my bosom! Sometimes, amidst the flights of imagination, I fondly fancy that if I could but once, only once press her to my heart, my happiness would be complete.

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## LETTER LXX.

*Oct. 26.*

I AM now, my dear friend, most perfectly satisfied that the existence of any individual can be of no importance to society. Charlotte having received a visit from some particular friend, I consequently retired into the adjoining room: I took up a book,

but not being disposed for reading, threw it aside, and took up the pen to address my friend. Thus, I candidly acknowledge how little you are obliged to me for this letter. Even now I overhear their conversation; they are telling each other the common occurrences of the town: one is going to be married, another is exceedingly ill, a dreadful hectic cough and continual faintings, there are no hopes of recovery. "Mr. S—— is also in a dangerous way," says Charlotte. "Ah!" replies the other, "I think myself now near their bedsides: I think I see them struggling with the tyrant death, and, during all their agonies and torments, wishing to live a little longer." And yet, my friend, these worthy young ladies are talking of their dying friends with all the composure and indifference as if they were utter strangers. Oh, heaven! when I look round the apartment where I now am, when I perceive Charlotte's clothes, her trinkets, Albert's papers all scattered about, the various things which are so familiar to me, even the very inkstand which I am at present using, I immediately reflect on what I am to this family; I am everything, they esteem me, they are happy in my company, and I am convinced that without them I should be miserable; yet, were I suddenly to leave them, how long would they be sensible of that vacuum which my absence would

occasion? How long! alas! such is the frailty of man, that where he most enjoys himself, and where his presence most contributes to the joy of others, where he lives in the hearts of his dearest friends, there must he perish, and his name be soon forgotten!

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## LETTER LXXI.

*Oct. 27.*

OH, I could tear open my breast, I could dash my head against the wall, when I experience the disappointment of disclosing my heart to another, who is incapable of sympathising with its feelings! I cannot receive from another the love, the joy, the rapture, the pleasure, which accord not with my own feeling; nor can I, with a heart glowing with the most lively sensations, communicate to another that happiness which nature has rendered him incapable of feeling.

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## LETTER LXXII.

*Evening.*

IMAGINATION gives me more than enough; the thought of Charlotte's lovely self obliterates every other idea, and renders all around me paradise; the world without her would indeed be nothing!

## LETTER LXXIII.

*Oct. 30.*

A THOUSAND times have I been tempted to throw my arms round her angelic waist and clasp her to my panting bosom ! Heavens ! it is torture to have such loveliness continually in view, and yet not dare to touch it ! To touch, is one of the first impulses of nature ; do not little infants endeavour to grasp at whatever strikes their fancy ? and I—yes, yes—I am a child indeed !

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## LETTER LXXIV.

*Nov. 3.*

How often, when about to close my eyes in bed, have I earnestly prayed that I might never open them again, yet, in the morning, I have opened them, again beheld the sun, and again felt all my former wretchedness ! Alas ! why am I not hypochondriacal, or mad ? why am I not permitted to ascribe this pungent misery to the effects of an intemperate climate, to disappointed ambition, or the malevolence of a persecuting enemy ? this burthen of sorrow would be then more tolerable ! but now, alas ! it is too sensibly felt, for it

rests entirely upon myself, I alone am the origin of all. This very bosom, which was formerly the seat of mirth and tranquillity, is now the melancholy source of innumerable sorrows! I am not what I was! formerly none but the most agreeable sensations ruled my mind; wherever I went the surrounding country seemed to me as paradise, and philanthropy glowed within my heart! but ah! cold apathy now freezes that heart, and it is dead to every enjoyment; my eyes are dry, they are no longer moistened with the refreshing tears of sensibility; my senses fail me, they no longer assist my brain! My sufferings are beyond expression, for I have lost the only charm of life, that noble, active faculty, which created worlds around me, it is no more! From my window I see the distant hills, the rising sun dispels the breaking clouds, and gilds the opening prospect with his radiant beams, the gentle stream winds softly through the naked willows, nature still displays all her wonderful beauties, still exhibits the most delightful scenes, yet my heart is now insensible, I remain blind—unmoved—inanimate! Oft have I prostrated myself upon the earth, imploring heaven for tears, as the farmer prays for rain to moisten his parched ground. But I see heaven will not grant either rain or sunshine to immoderate importunities. Former times, the recol-

lection of which tears my very heart, were indeed happy, for I patiently waited the will of Heaven, and was grateful for all its blessings.

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## LETTER LXXV.

Nov. 8.

I HAVE been tenderly reproved by Charlotte for my late excesses ; for, to confess the truth, my dear friend, I have, for some time past, exceeded my usual quantity of wine, in order to drown care. " Pray (said she), don't do so, think of Charlotte." " Alas ! how unnecessary that advice ; I do think of you, and more than *think*, you are for ever before my eyes, you are for ever in my heart ! This very morning I was sitting in the place where you were the preceding day——" hereupon she changed the subject ; indeed, my friend, I am a mere puppet, which this dear divine creature can make to move and act as she pleases.

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## LETTER LXXVI.

Nov. 15.

I THANK my friend sincerely for his kind advice, and more especially for his generous endeavours to

mend my situation ; but wherefore take this unnecessary trouble ? leave me to myself, unhappy as I am, I am still able to endure my sufferings.\*

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## LETTER LXXVII.

Nov. 21.

CHARLOTTE little thinks that she is preparing a poison for me, which in all probability will destroy us both. To me she presents the deadly draught, and I swallow it in large potations. What mean those tender looks, which are sometimes bestowed on me—that courtesy, which listens to all the occasional sentiments which escape me ; that sympathy, which I sometimes read in her angelic face ? When I took leave of her yesterday, she held out her hand, and said, “ Farewell, dear Werter ! ” *dear Werter !* It struck my very heart, it was the first time I had ever heard her call me *dear*—I shall never never forget the tender sound—a thousand times have I repeated it since ; and last night,

\* The remainder of this letter relates to *religion*, and somewhat accords with the writer’s sentiments upon *suicide* ; it is therefore omitted. Another translator has substituted a letter of his own : but, however he may boast of his inventive talents, he has certainly imposed upon his readers.—TRANSLATOR.

when I went to bed, I involuntary cried, "Good night, *dear* Werter." I recollected myself, and smiled at the self-compliment.

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## LETTER LXXVIII.

Nov. 22.

I CANNOT solicit heaven that she may be mine *soon*, yet I frequently imagine her mine *already*. I cannot solicit that she may be mine *now*, for she is already another's! Fruitless my sorrows, un-availing my complaints; oh, that this heart and I could separate!

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## LETTER LXXIX.

Nov. 24.

CHARLOTTE is now conscious of my sufferings. To-day I found her alone, her looks quite overcame me, and I was silent. She fixed her eyes stedfastly upon me, the fire of genius and the charms of beauty were gone; but there was something in her countenance which spoke more forcibly—which spoke the kindest compassion, the tenderest concern. Why did false ceremony prevent me from

falling at her feet, from embracing her, and gratefully repaying her pity with a thousand kisses? During my embarrassment she went to her harpsichord, and, in a soft melodious voice, accompanied the plaintive sounds. Her lips never appeared so lovely, they seemed to open just to receive the notes of the instrument, and assist the vibration with double harmony. My feelings were beyond expression. I was quite overpowered, and bending low, I made the following solemn protestation :—  
“ Sweet lips, which angels seem to protect, never will I think of profaning you ! ” And yet how I wish to taste this felicity ; but no, impossible ! here is an eternal barrier between us. But could I live one moment on those lips, I would contentedly die the next !

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## LETTER LXXX.

*Nov. 26.*

SOMETIMES I think my fate is singular, that other people are blessed, and I alone am cursed. Then perusing some ancient bard, I read as if it was expressed of myself :—“ When will these sorrows cease ? was there ever such a wretch ? ”

## LETTER LXXXI.

*Nov. 30.*

My fate I see is decided, everything conspires to augment my distress, and indicates my future destiny.

This day, about dinner time, having no inclination to sit down to the table, I took a solitary walk by the river-side ; the country appeared all deserted, the day was gloomy, a cold easterly wind blew from the hills, and black, heavy clouds overspread the plain. At a distance I saw a man in an old great-coat, who was wandering amongst the rocks, and apparently looking for plants. As soon as I approached him he turned round, when I perceived a very interesting countenance expressive of a settled melancholy. His fine black hair was flowing negligently over his shoulders. I asked him what he was looking for ; he replied, with a far-fetched sigh, "I am looking, sir, for flowers, but I have not been able to meet with even one." I told him this was not the season for flowers. "But," said he, "there are many flowers, notwithstanding ; I have several roses and lilies in my garden ; my father gave me one sort, they grow everywhere ;" I have been these two whole days in search of some, but I can find none. There are always flowers,

yellow, blue, and red, in the fields here, particularly the centaury, which grows in such pretty clusters, and yet I can find none of any sort." I now asked him for what he wanted these flowers? He smiled, and holding up his finger with a distrustful air, "Be sure you tell no one," he cried; "I have promised my dear girl a nosegay!" "That was right," I told him. "Oh, she possesses everything," he continued; "she is very, very rich." "But," I interrupted, "she is partial to your nosegays." "Oh," continued he, "she has jewels and a crown?" I inquired her name, still he ran on—"if the States General would pay me, then I should be a different sort of a man. Ah me! there was a time when I was happy, very, very happy! but that time is gone, 'tis past, 'tis past!" and here he raised his swimming eyes to heaven. "There *was* a time, then," said I, "that you *were* happy!" "Ah," he replied, "would to Heaven I was the same now, yes, I was happy then, so merry, so contented, I was like a fish in the water." An old woman, who was now advancing towards us, exclaimed, "Henry, Henry! where have you been? I have been looking for you everywhere. Come, dinner is ready." I asked her if he was her son. "Yes," she replied, "my poor unfortunate boy! Heaven has been pleased to send us this affliction!" I then inquired if he had been long in this condition? She answered,

“He has been as quiet as he is now for about six months, Heaven be praised ! he was one whole year quite raving, and chained down in a mad-house ; at present he is quite inoffensive, he does nobody any harm ; but his entire discourse is about kings and emperors. He was a worthy creature, and formerly helped to maintain me. He wrote an excellent hand, but all of a sudden became melancholy, was seized with a burning fever, grew outrageously mad, and is now as you see him. Ah, sir, if you knew——” I interrupted her by inquiring what was the happy time he alluded to ? “Ah, poor lad !” she answered, with a smile of compassion, “that was the time, sir, when he was outrageously mad, and confined ; he never ceases to regret it.” I was amazed, and putting some money into her hand, we parted.

“*You were happy,*” said I to myself, while hastily walking back. “*You were then like a fish in the water.*” Good Heaven ! is this the fate of man ? Is he only happy before he attains reason, and after he has lost it ? Poor wretch ! and yet how I envy thy condition, full of hopes thou goest to gather flowers for thy queen in winter ! thou art distressed at not finding them, and canst not account for thy disappointment ; but, as for me, I walk out without any hope, or any view, and return just the same. To thy disordered imagination, it seems,

that if paid by the States General, thou wouldst then be a man of consequence ; and it is fortunate for thee that thou canst ascribe thy sufferings to any foreign power. Thou dost not know, thou dost not feel, that all thy pain arises from a deranged mind, a disordered brain, and that all the monarchs in the world could not relieve thee. May they die without hope, who can laugh at the sick man that travels to distant springs only to increase his complaint, and render death more painful ! or who triumph over the desponding soul that, to alleviate the stings of conscience, and quiet the mind, makes a pilgrimage to the Holy Land ! Every step of the rugged path which lacerates his feet, is balm to his heart, and every night of his journey brings him nearer to hope and consolation. Will you presume to call this extravagance ; you who raise yourselves upon stilts to make flowery orations ? Extravagance ! Oh heavens ! is not our allotted portion of misery sufficient, without being increased by the harassing follies of our neighbours ? The strengthening and cherishing vine, the salutary and healing plant, relief and saving health, are all divine dispensations. Omnipotent Father ! whom I know not, thou who was wont to cheer my gloomy soul, why hast thou forsaken me ? Call back thy wanderer, speak comfort to his heart, my soul thirsts after thee, and cannot brook thy silence !

Can a father be enraged with his son who suddenly enters his presence, hangs on his neck, and cries "Forgive me, dear father, for having shortened my journey, and returned before the appointed time ! The world I found everywhere the same : labour, trouble, pleasure, reward, all were indifferent to me ; in thy presence only can be happiness, and thy presence I seek, be the consequence what it may !"

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## LETTER LXXXII.

*Dec. 1.*

OH my friend ! that poor insane wretch, whom I mentioned in my last, but whose wretchedness is much to be envied, was clerk to Charlotte's father. He became unfortunately attached to her, cherished and concealed his passion, but at last discovered it : accordingly he was dismissed, and became the maniac as was described. Conceive, if possible, what an impression this brief discovery made upon me, a discovery which Albert communicated with as much calm indifference as, in all probability, you will now receive it.

## LETTER LXXXIII.

*Dec. 4.*

INDEED, my friend, I can support this state no longer. I was with Charlotte to-day ; she was playing upon her harpsichord with an expression that is beyond expression. Her little sister was dressing her doll upon my lap. Tears stole down my cheeks. In leaning over I happened to see her wedding ring, and my tears now multiplying became a torrent. She then immediately began a favourite air, which has often charmed and composed me. A while it afforded the desired consolation, but soon it brought to recollection the happy time which is past. Misery, disappointment ! I started up, walked about the room with hasty steps. At last I went up to her, and eagerly exclaimed, " For Heaven's sake forbear to play that tune ! " She stopped—stared at me ; and with a smile which penetrated my very heart, said, " Indeed, Werter, I fear you are very ill ; you have taken a strange aversion to your most favourite food. Pray go, and endeavour to compose yourself." I tore myself from her. Good Heaven ! thou seest my agonies, and, I trust, will terminate them.

## LETTER LXXXIV.

*Dec. 6.*

CHARLOTTE'S image haunts me. Awake or asleep, my tortured fancy sees her. When I seek repose I find her lovely dark eyes imprinted on my brain. Here I cannot explain myself. No sooner do I close my weary eyelids than her sweet form floats before my imagination, and the airy phantom subdues all my faculties. What is man? That boasted demi-god! When he requires exertion, his strength forsakes him; whether he swims in the tide of pleasure or stems the torrent of misery he must one day stop; and though immortality be his hope, his assurance is, that to his cold, original existence he must soon return.

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## THE EDITOR (GOETHE) TO THE READER.

*(Including additional Letters.)*

FOR the sake of giving a more connected account of the last days of Werter, it is absolutely expedient to interrupt the course of his letters by a short narrative, the particulars of which have been furnished by the old steward, Albert, Charlotte, his own servant, and the people with whom he lodged.

The unfortunate passion which Werter had entertained for Charlotte had insensibly diminished the harmony which at first subsisted between her and Albert. The husband's affection was sincere, but moderate, and by degrees gave way to his greater partiality for business. Yet he did not acknowledge, nor even think, that there was any great difference between his days of courtship and those of marriage. However, the marked attention of Werter to his wife gave him secret uneasiness, for this attention not only appeared an infringement on his rights, but a tacit reproach for his inattention. What rendered him still more dissatisfied and peevish were the increasing difficulties of his employment and the decreasing emolument. The sorrow which preyed on Werter's mind had wholly extinguished the fire of his genius, deprived him of his wonted vivacity and quickness of perception, and rendered him in company spiritless and inactive. Charlotte, who saw him every day, was naturally affected at this sudden change, and became equally dull and thoughtful. This melancholy Albert deemed the effect of an increasing passion for her lover, while Werter imputed it to his apparent neglect of her. The want of confidence which had formerly subsisted between these two friends rendered their company mutually disagreeable. Albert never would enter his wife's apart-

ment when he knew Werter was there, and Werter, who perceived his dissatisfaction, having in vain endeavoured to discontinue his visits entirely, would never see Charlotte but when he knew her husband was engaged. These *secret* visits increased Albert's discontent and jealousy, and he took an opportunity of seriously informing his wife that, were it for the sake of appearance only, she should conduct herself in another manner towards Werter, and not admit him so often into her presence. About this time the unfortunate Werter meditated on self-destruction. This had long been the subject of his contemplation, particularly since his return from Charlotte's neighbourhood. The idea had been always fondly cherished, but he was unwilling to perpetrate the serious deed with too much rashness and precipitation : he was determined to act like a man, with resolution, yet with calmness.

Having called on the 8th of December to see Charlotte as usual, he found her family in the greatest confusion. Her eldest brother informed him that the cause of this general consternation was a sad calamity which had happened the preceding night—a peasant was murdered. Werter did not seem at first much concerned at this information. He entered the apartment where Charlotte was, and perceived her earnestly importuning her father (who was anxious to inquire into

the circumstances of this murder) not to venture abroad on account of his late severe indisposition. Intelligence was brought that the body had been found at daybreak before the door of a house. The murderer was as yet undiscovered, but there were strong suspicions, for the deceased was a servant to a widow, who previously had another servant that quitted her service with apparent dissatisfaction. Werter, startled at this report, hastily rose, and exclaimed, "Is it possible! I must go to Walheim immediately; I can stay no longer." Accordingly he repaired with haste to Walheim; and his imagination increasing, he began to be confirmed in his opinion that the young peasant whom he had so frequently addressed, and to whom he was so much attached, was the unfortunate offender. As soon as he approached the inn, which was surrounded by all the inhabitants of the town, he heard a general clamour, and perceived at a distance a large body of armed people, while distant shouts proclaimed that the murderer was apprehended. Werter's suspicions were now confirmed. It was, indeed, the very youth who was so violently attached to the widow, and whom not long before this he had met, straying about, with looks of smothered anger and concealed despair. "Poor wretch!" exclaimed Werter, approaching the prisoner. "What have you done?" The youth beheld him with calm

indifference—was silent for some minutes, but at length broke out, “No one shall have her; she shall never be another’s.” The prisoner was conducted into the inn, and Werter departed hastily. Discomposed by this melancholy scene, he became inexpressibly melancholy, and the sympathy which it excited was accompanied with an ardent desire to save the love-sick lad. He thought him so unfortunate that, guilty as he was, he deemed him guiltless; and, impressed with this idea, presumed he could make his innocence appear. He returned with all possible speed, and entering the Steward’s apartment, quite exhausted and breathless in order to speak in the prisoner’s behalf, he suddenly met Albert there, whose unexpected presence added to his discomposure. He endeavoured, however, to collect his spirits on this occasion, and began warmly to espouse the young man’s cause. During his short, but pithy intercession, the Steward frequently shook his head, and at last interrupted him by a severe reprimand for attempting to defend a murderer. “There would be no use for law—there could be no security, if such mistaken lenity was to take place. Besides (added he) I must perform the duties of a magistrate, and the law must take its regular course.”

Notwithstanding all this discouragement, Werter still continued his solicitations, and even hinted a

wish that the lad might be afforded an opportunity to make his escape, proposing his own assistance for that purpose. Albert, who had all this while been silently attentive, now delivered his sentiments in concurrence with those of the Steward, which so exceedingly mortified Werter that he left the room in extreme agitation, while the old gentleman had just exclaimed, "Impossible ! he must not be saved."

The deep impression which these words had made upon his mind will appear from the following letter, which was certainly written on the same day, and was afterwards found among his manuscripts.

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### LETTER LXXXV.

UNFORTUNATE youth. Thy doom is fixed. Thou art not to be saved. Alas ! evident destruction awaits us both.

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Werter, it seems, was sensibly affected by what Albert had then said. Indeed, he imagined that his observations had been pointed at him ; and though, on mature deliberation, he must have been convinced that both these gentlemen's ideas were

just, yet the supposed sarcasm rendered him more determined on suicide. His various doubts and struggles may be seen by the following fragment of a letter intended for his friend, and which was also found among his papers.

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## LETTER LXXXVI.

HER divine presence, her sweet smiles, the interest she seems to take in my fate, almost draw tears from my disordered—my exhausted brain. The poor peasant could not bear the loss of his mistress; could not bear a rival in his love. Alas, why was the Steward so inexorable? he might have been saved! To draw the curtain, and pass to the other side, that is all. Why then these doubts, these fears? Because we are ignorant what may follow; there is no possibility of returning. Where there is uncertainty, the mind is naturally confused and intimidated.

\* \* \* \* \*

While Secretary to the Ambassador, the various mortifications he had endured were never forgotten. On the contrary, they stung him deeply, he thought himself degraded, his pride was hurt, and he consequently became disgusted with all public business

and political affairs. From that time he became dissatisfied with the world, and indulged those extravagant opinions, those extraordinary sentiments, with which his letters abound, and that ill-fated, that boundless passion, which tended to consume all his remaining vigour. The continued sameness of his situation, the sadness of his interviews with the most amiable and beloved of her sex, whose peace of mind he had disturbed; his conflicts, his struggles, and the thoughts of living for nothing, all combined to fix his determination of leaving a wretched world.

The following letters which he left behind, with several others, will be sufficient testimony of his disordered mind.

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### LETTER LXXXVII.

*Dec. 12.*

INDEED, my friend, I am certainly affected as those poor wretches who were formerly supposed to be possessed by devils. I am subject to sudden starts, and strange emotions; it is not agony, it is not passion, but a secret rage, which preys upon my mind, and almost suffocates me. While in this wretched state I suddenly rise, and frequently wander at midnight amidst those gloomy scenes

which the present unfriendly season exhibits. Thus was I induced to roam last night. I heard that the river and all the neighbouring brooks had overflowed their banks, and that, from Walheim to my favourite valley, was under water. Thither I ran, though past eleven o'clock. The sight was gloomy and awful, the moon was behind a cloud ; but a few of her scattered beams discovered the foaming waves overspreading the fields, and beating against the thickets. The whole valley formed a stormy sea, agitated by furious winds. The moon then emerging from a dark cloud increased by her splendour the disorder of nature. Echoes not only repeated, but redoubled the roarings of the wind and waters. I approached the precipice. I wished, but trembled. I stretched out my arms, I leaned over, I sighed, I lost myself in the pleasing idea of burying all my calamities, my torments, in that abyss and agitation of the waves. Why were my feet riveted to the earth? Why not have terminated all my sorrows? But I feel it, my friend ; my hour is not yet come ! Oh, with what joy would I have changed my nature, and have incorporated with the whirlwinds, to rend the clouds and agitate the deep. With sorrow I beheld a little spot where once, after a summer's ramble, I sat under a willow by the side of Charlotte : this also was under water, and I could scarcely distinguish

the tree. Ah, my friend, I then thought of the Steward's house, the surrounding fields, our favourite walks, the green recesses, all perhaps spoiled by the torrent; and the recollection of these precious moments distracted my heart! Thus the sleeping captive, by dreams, is reminded of those very blessings of which he is deprived. I declined, but I don't reproach myself, for still I have courage—to die!—and so I should. At present I am like a poor old feeble woman, who picks dry sticks along the hedge-side, and supplicates bread from house to house, in order to prolong a wretched existence.

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### LETTER LXXXVIII.

*Dec. 14.*

THOUGH I cannot account for it, my friend, still my mind is distracted. Is not my love for Charlotte most pure and sacred; is it not the love of a brother for his sister? Did ever I conceive a wish that was dishonourable? Oaths are unnecessary to confirm my innocence. And now, such dreams! Good Heaven! they were certainly in the right who ascribed contending passions to extraneous powers. Even last night—I tremble while I write it—last night I held her in my arms. I clasped

her to my bosom, and on her trembling lips imprinted burning, luxuriant kisses. Her eyes were full of melting softness; mine beamed with joy and rapture. Can the pleasure which now I feel in recollecting this imaginary pleasure be a crime? Oh, Charlotte, Charlotte, my doom is fixed. I can no longer endure this perturbed, this disordered state, I am distracted, I have not been myself this whole week. My eyes swim with tears, every place to me is alike, for in none can I find peace! I desire nothing, yet wish for everything. Ah, me! 'twere better far to quit this world at once!

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## LETTER LXXXIX.

*Dec. 20.*

I THANK my friend for his kind and seasonable intimation of what I should do—yes, it was properly urged, indeed, that I should at once quit my present station; but your advice which follows of immediately returning to your neighbourhood by no means meets my approbation. I conceive that a ramble in my romantic way will have a much better effect on my scattered spirits, particularly as we now expect a frost, and consequently good roads. Your friendship charms me when you propose

coming to fetch me, but, I must entreat you will postpone your intention for about ten days, or a fortnight, and not set out on your journey till you receive *another* letter from me. We should not be in a hurry to gather fruit before it is ripe; and a fortnight, you know, either before or after, makes a material difference. Desire my mother to remember me in her prayers, and assure her that I am exceedingly sorry for all the unintended distress I have brought on her. Alas, my friend! it has long been my fate to communicate misery where most of all I wished to confer happiness. Farewell, my dearest friend, and may all those blessings which you so richly deserve be ever yours! I need not wish you more. Adieu!

\* \* \* \* \*

The day on which Werter wrote this last letter, (which was Sunday, preceding Christmas) he called on Charlotte in the dusk of the evening. He found her alone, and busy, according to her annual custom, in preparing Christmas presents for her sisters and brothers. He began his conversation with remarks on the innocent diversions of the season, and the satisfaction and pleasure they afforded to children. "Well, you shall have a present, too, if you behave well," said Charlotte, disguising the deep concern she felt for him with a serene smile. Werter immediately replied: "What

do you call behaving well, my dear Charlotte?" She answered, "Thursday next will be Christmas Eve—the children and my father will all be here, do you also come, there is a present for each, but do not come before Christmas Eve." Sudden astonishment pervaded Werter's countenance—he would have replied, but Charlotte prevented him by continuing, "Indeed it must be so, I request it may—nay, I *demand* it as a particular favour, for there are pressing—very pressing reasons:" then in a milder tone of voice, accompanied with a most engaging look, she tenderly added, "Believe me, 'tis for our mutual peace and tranquillity I ask this favour. Ah, Werter! we must not go on in this manner any longer. Come, then, resume your former self, and conquer this unfortunate attachment, a passion which I can only—only dare to pity." Werter hung his head, and sighed—Charlotte, perceiving his dejection, took him by the hand. "Be patient, Werter, be more resigned, nor give way to this delusion, which can only terminate in your destruction. Am I not married?—why, then, think of me? indeed, I fear that 'tis because I *am* married Werter indulges an unavailing passion." He now beheld her with a look of keen resentment, and dismay. "Indeed! Can this be Charlotte's *own* opinion?"—then with hasty steps he walked up and down the room,

when, suddenly stopping, he exclaimed, "No, it cannot be—it is the narrow-minded sentiments of sullen *Albert!*" Charlotte, with all the suavity she could command on the occasion, assured him that he was blinded by his ungovernable passion, that it was *her* sentiment—the sentiment of one who highly respected his many amiable virtues—of one who was interested in his favour, and felt exceedingly for his thus giving way to a destructive passion. "Come," added she, "be yourself again, and only think of me as an affectionate friend. Consider what the world suffers when a man of your exalted genius and talents secludes himself from it. Enter again into the gay circles, and seek another object for your love, one who will deserve it, and is at liberty to return it. I engage you will soon find one—the experiment at least is worth your attention, and the journey will, no doubt, tend to calm your ruffled mind. I do not despair of your meeting with a worthy woman—then return again, and we shall all participate of that domestic peace and happiness which arise from social friendship." "Dear Charlotte," said Werter, with a significant smile, "that speech should be printed for the benefit of all pedants and moralists. I ask your indulgence but a little longer, and then all, I trust, will be well." "But Werter, don't let me see you," said she, "before

Thursday night." He was going to answer, but Albert suddenly entered. He coldly saluted Werter, who walked up and down the room with evident embarrassment. They talked of various subjects, but soon forgot them all—Albert interrogated Charlotte about some trifling commissions which he had given her, and finding that she had been remiss, uttered such keen reproaches as cut the very heart of Werter. He wished to depart, but knew not how, and, in this embarrassed situation remained till about eight o'clock; during which time, his agitation and acrimony were continually increasing; at last the servant laid the cloth, and Werter then took his leave, Albert giving him but a cold invitation to stay for supper. With deep melancholy, and slow pace, he now returned home, took the candle from the servant, and silently, and alone, went up to his chamber. He was heard to weep bitterly, to talk with great earnestness, and to walk hastily up and down his room. At length, without undressing, he threw himself on the bed, where his servant, (who then ventured in) found him at eleven o'clock. Werter permitted him to assist in taking off his boots, but desired him not to come in again till he rang for him.

The following letter, written Monday morning, Dec. 21, was found, after his decease, sealed in

his bureau. It was delivered to Charlotte, according to the address, and is here inserted in the unconnected state it seems to have been written.

---

## LETTER XC.

✓ DEAR CHARLOTTE,—'Tis fixed—I am resolved on death! I tell you so with coolness and deliberation, without any sudden transport—any burning rage. Dearest and most amiable of women, ere you read these lines the inanimate remains of the poor wretch, whose greatest pleasure in his last moments was conversing with you, will be deposited in a cold grave. Oh! what a dreadful night of ceaseless perturbation I have passed! Yet I may call it an auspicious night, for it has removed all my fears and fixed my wavering mind—yes; I am resolved on death! Yesterday, when I tore myself away from you, my senses, like the elements, were clouded and unsettled, my heart was sad; without hope, without one ray of pleasure, and my whole frame was cold as ice! It was with difficulty I reached home. When I entered my chamber I threw myself on my knees, and heaven was pleased to grant me, for the last time, the relief of generous tears. A thousand ideas, a thousand different projects racked my troubled

soul. At length that thought, which has frequently occurred, now took deep root within me—death! It is not despair, but a conviction that life is not worth keeping. I have certainly completed my sufferings, for the cup of sorrow is brim-full—I have now reached the goal, the sacrifice must be made for happiness sake; yes, dearest Charlotte, *your* happiness—one of us three *must* perish, and shall Werter hesitate to be that one? Oh, beloved angel! more than once has this unruly mind, governed by rage and madness, conceived the horrid, impious thought, of murdering your husband! 'tis just, then, I should die!

\* \* \* \* \*

About ten o'clock in the morning Werter rung the bell, and told the servant to lay his clothes in order, to call in his bills, to fetch home some books he had lent, and to advance two months pay to all those poor people who were accustomed to receive from him a weekly allowance; as, in a few days, he was going to take a long journey. He breakfasted in his chamber, and afterwards went on horseback to the Steward's, whom he did not find at home. He now took a solitary walk in the garden, indulging himself with painful reflections. The children, anxious to see him, soon interrupted his solitude, and while dancing and playing about him said, "that after to-morrow, and to-morrow,

and one day more, they were to receive their Christmas presents from their sister," and then begun, according to their fond imaginations, to paint to him all the wonderful things which they expected. "To-morrow," cried he, "and to-morrow, and one day more," then, preparing to go, he embraced them alternately with the greatest tenderness; but the youngest boy stopped him to say that his eldest brother had written very pretty complimentary verses on the new year, for all friends; and that they were to be presented early on New Year's Day—one to papa, one to Albert, one to Charlotte, and one to Werter. At this he was very much affected—his fortitude entirely forsook him, and giving each of the children a present, at the same time enjoining them to give his best respects to their father, he left them with great emotion. On his return home he desired his servant to keep up the fire, to pack up his books and linen at the bottom of the trunk, and lay his clothes over them. The following letter to Charlotte appears to be written at this time:—

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#### LETTER XCI.

BELOVED,—You do not expect me! You think I shall obey you, and that I shall not see you till

Christmas Eve. Oh, dearest angel, to-day or never! On Christmas Eve you will hold this paper in your trembling hand, and wet it with the tears of pity! Yes, Charlotte; it is decreed, and I am satisfied, well satisfied, that it is finally resolved.

\* \* \* \* \*

He called upon Charlotte about six the same day. She had no opportunity to deny herself, for he rushed in and found her alone, sitting. Her confusion was great when she saw him, having, in a late conversation with Albert, assured him that Werter did not mean to repeat his visit till Christmas Eve, who accordingly, though a very wet day, rode out in order to settle some business. She was exceedingly distressed at this unkind interruption. She was, however, conscious of her own innocence. She loved her husband, and she pitied Werter. As soon as he appeared she said to him with tears, "Werter, you have not kept your word." "I made no promise," he replied. "But," rejoined Charlotte, "you should have complied with my request for both our sakes." She sent immediately to some of her friends, and requested their company that evening, not only for the sake of their being witnesses of their conversation, but that Werter, in order to see them safe home, might be induced to leave her sooner. He brought her some books, which, and others that he had before lent

her, became the subject of their discourse. She also introduced some other topics during the time her friends were expected ; but presently the servant returned with different excuses from them all. This disappointment disconcerted her for a while, but, conscious of her innocence, she soon recovered her spirits, and felt herself inspired with a laudable confidence that fortified her mind against all Albert's mean suspicions. At first she intended that the servant maid should remain in the room, but, satisfied with the purity of her own heart, she rejected the intention. She went to her harpsichord, played a few of her favourite airs, and became perfectly composed ; then, sitting beside Werter on the sofa, she asked him if he had anything to read to her. He gravely replied, "Nothing." "Open then that drawer," she cried, "and you will there find your own translation of the 'Songs of Ossian,' which I have not yet read. I knew they would come better from *your* lips ; but you have been so truant of late, I was unwilling to ask you before." He smiled, and went for the manuscript ; but when he took it up, evinced a sudden emotion. He then sat down in tears, and, with a faltering voice, began to read. After some time he came to these affecting lines, wherein Armin mourns the loss of his beloved child :—

ALONE, on the sea-beaten rock,  
My daughter was heard to complain,  
Loud and frequent, alas ! were her sighs—  
The father's assistance was vain !

I stood on the shore all the night,  
And by the pale moon saw her plain ;  
All the night heard her heartrending cries,  
Though loud was the wind—hard the rain !

Before the bright morning appeared,  
Her voice, weak and faltering, alas !  
Died away like the soft evening breeze  
That passes the rock's slender grass—

Exhausted with grief she expired.  
And left thee, poor Armin, alone !  
Now lost is thy strength in the war,  
Thy pride among women is gone !

When storms from the mountains burst forth,  
On high when the billows they raise,  
I sit by the sad sounding shore ;  
On the rock, fatal rock, then I gaze.

Whene'er the moon's setting, I see  
The shades of my dear children walk,  
They seem half concealed from my view,  
And sadly together they talk !

"In pity will none of you speak ?"  
Not heeding their father they go ;  
I'm sad, very sad, I'm indeed,  
For great is the cause of my woe !

Here a flood of tears gushed from the eyes of Charlotte, which afforded some relief to the oppression of her heart. Werter threw down the paper, seized her hand, and bathed it with his tears. Charlotte leaned on the other arm, and held her handkerchief to her eyes ; they were both of them exceedingly agitated. This sad story revived their misfortunes, and excited their mutual sympathy. The ardent eyes and lips of Werter were riveted on her alabaster arms ; she trembled, and attempted to leave the room, but grief and soft compassion prevented her from moving ; relieved by sighs and intervening tears, she begged him to proceed. Werter, much exhausted, took up the paper, and, with a faltering voice, continued his reading :—

Why dost thou awake me, O gale?  
I'm covered with dew-drops, it says,  
But the time of my fading is near,  
The blast which my foliage decays.

To-morrow the traveller shall come,  
Who once saw me comely and bold ;  
His eyes shall the meadow search round,  
But me they shall never behold !

These words, so applicable to our hero's situation, like lightning penetrated his soul—wild, and full of despair, he threw himself at Charlotte's feet, and

seizing her hands applied them first to his eyes and then to his forehead. Charlotte, for the first time, began to conceive his fatal intention. This secret apprehension almost deprived her of her senses ; with tenderness she pressed his hands, pressed them to her bosom, and while, with emotions of sweet sensibility, she was gently inclining her head towards him, her glowing cheek accidentally touched his. During these perturbed moments they were insensible of everything but mutual affection. Werter clasped her in his arms, pressed her to his throbbing heart, and on her trembling lips impressed a thousand ardent kisses. "Werter !" she cried, with a faint, tremulous voice, and turned her face from him, "Werter," she repeated, and with her feeble hand she removed him from her, then, retreating a few steps, she fixed upon him her eyes beaming with both majesty and virtue, and once more called upon the name of "Werter." Seized with sudden awe, he respectfully moved farther, and fell on his knees ! she trembling, now retired towards the door, and, in a voice of pity, blended with resentment, thus addressed him, "This is the last time, Werter ! You shall never see me again !" Then, vouchsafing the unhappy lover one look more of the utmost tenderness, she hastened to her chamber and locked herself in. Werter extended his arms to her, but

did not presume to detain her. For some time he retained his melancholy posture on the ground, with his head reclined on the sofa, but was at length roused from his reverie by the noise of the servant who was coming to lay the cloth. He then walked up and down the room, and on the servant's departure he approached the door of Charlotte's chamber, and with a faint voice cried, "Charlotte, Charlotte, one word more, only a last farewell!" He listened, but received no reply. Again he entreated, and again listened, but in vain; then, tearing himself from the place, he cried in tremulous accents, "Dear, dearest Charlotte! farewell, farewell for ever!"

Quite exhausted, Werter now approached the gate of the town; the guard knew him, and let him pass. The night was dark and stormy, with much rain and snow. About eleven o'clock he reached home; his servant perceived he was without his hat, but prudently declined taking any notice of it. In assisting to undress him he found his clothes exceedingly wet and dirty. The hat was afterwards found upon the summit of a rock, situated on the declivity of a mountain, where it is astonishing he could have climbed in such a dark and stormy night without falling down the precipice, and being dashed to pieces. He went to bed, and slept till late the next morning. When his servant

brought him his breakfast he was writing ; it was the following continuation of his former letter to Charlotte :—

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## LETTER XC.

(Continued.)

FOR the last time I now open my eyes, they will never again see the rising sun, there is a cloud forbids it ; they will never again behold thy angelic form. Death must forbid it ! Death ! and what is death ? eternal sleep ! We dream when we talk of it. Have I not seen many die ? but such are the limits of our circumscribed understandings, that we are altogether ignorant of either the beginning or end of our existence. At present I am myself, or rather *thine*, dear Charlotte ; but soon, alas ! we shall be separated, perhaps for ever ! Yet no, no, Charlotte, as we are sensible of our present existence, annihilation is impossible. Annihilation ! another empty sound ! Death ! Ah, Charlotte, interred in a dark, confined, cold grave ! Once I had a friend, the delight of my early days, she died ! I followed her hearse, I stood near the grave, and heard the creaking of the cords which let down the coffin. When the first shovelful of earth was thrown in, the coffin returned a hollow sound ; these sounds gradually decreased, and the

grave at last was filled. I then threw myself on the ground, my heart was oppressed, was smitten, rent ! I was insensible of what then happened to me, and equally ignorant of what was to happen. Death ! Grave ! Unmeaning words !

Dearest Charlotte, forgive me. Yesterday ! Yesterday ! Oh, that fatal moment should have terminated my life ; I should then have died happy, for thou lovest me ! Oh, heaven ! thou lovest me ! I am transported by the very thought. These lips still glow with the sacred warmth they received from thine ! This heart still feels the rapture that was then infused—yet to offend—forgive, dear Charlotte—ah, forgive !

Yes, I thought I was dear to thee, I saw it in the first animated look which thou directed to me, I was conscious of it when first thou gently pressed my hand. Yet, when I was absent from thee, or when I perceived Albert by thy side, then all my doubts, my fears returned ! Dost thou remember the flowers thou sent when at a crowded assembly thou couldst neither speak to me nor give me thy hand ? I passed half the night in adoring these pledges of affection ; but what was that to the pleasure received yesterday ? A whole eternity could never efface the impression of your sweet lips ! Thou lovest me ! These arms have embraced thee, these lips, with rapture, have joined with

thine ! Thou art mine—yes, Charlotte, mine for ever ! Albert is, I know, thy husband ; what then ? And he is thy husband for life, therefore, in this life, it would be deemed a crime to love thee ; but I shall punish myself ; I have already tasted of pleasure, which has revived my drooping spirits. I must not drink too deep, for fear ; but thou art mine ; I go before thee to my Father—thy Father—at the foot of whose celestial throne I will carry my sorrows, and hope for consolation till thou comest ; then will I fly on seraph's wings to meet thee, then will I claim thee, and we shall remain together for ever. This is no dream, no fond imagination, remember—*We shall live hereafter, we shall know, we shall see each other again.*

\* \* \* \* \*

About eleven o'clock, Werter inquired of his servant if Albert was yet returned. He told him he was, for he had seen him pass by on horseback. Werter then gave him the following note, unsealed, to carry to his house.

“ I AM going to take a journey, pray lend me your pistols. Adieu.

“ WERTER.”

THE amiable Charlotte had passed the night in the utmost distress and agitation. A thousand painful sensations pressed upon her mind ! The

ardour of Werter's passionate embraces had, in spite of all punctilious delicacies, found way to her heart. She recollected all the former days of innocence and tranquillity which, contrasted with the present, seemed to have new charms. She dreaded the frowns of Albert and his keen reproaches when he should hear of Werter's visit. She had never been guilty of a falsehood ; she had never practised dissimulation ; yet for the first time deemed it necessary to conceal the truth. Her extreme delicacy and the repugnance she felt made her fault appear to her considerable, and yet she could neither hate the author of it, nor determine on forbidding him her presence. Sad and exhausted, she was scarcely dressed when she saw Albert ; it was the first time she saw him with dissatisfaction. She trembled lest he should perceive she had been weeping, and discover her languor for the want of sleep, while her apprehensions on this score served to increase her embarrassment. She received him with a kind of eagerness which evinced more terror and confusion than real satisfaction. This did not escape the observant eye of Albert, who when he had opened some letters gravely inquired if there were any news, and if any one had called during his absence. After some hesitation, she told him Werter had called yesterday, and stayed about an hour. "He chooses his time well," said Albert, and then retired

into his room. Charlotte now remained alone and pensive for about a quarter of an hour. The presence of a man whom she so cordially esteemed and loved gave a new turn to her thoughts. His past kindness, his benevolence, his integrity, his attachment to her alone, all recurred to her mind, and she reproached herself for having so ill requited him. A secret impulse prompted her to follow him. On entering the room where he was, she asked him if he wanted anything. Albert coldly answered in the negative, and began to write. She sat down to work. He sometimes left the desk to walk up and down the room, while these opportunities Charlotte took of entering into conversation with him ; but he evaded it, by scarcely vouchsafing her any answer, and resuming his seat. This cruel behaviour was rendered the more intolerable by her endeavours to conceal the concern which it occasioned, and to restrain the tears which were every moment ready to flow. An hour had passed in this painful situation when the arrival of Werter's servant completed her distress. As soon as Albert had read the note, with calm indifference he turned to his wife, and said, "Give him the pistols ; I wish him a good journey." This order was a thunder-stroke to Charlotte. She rose, alarmed, from her seat ; with a slow and tottering pace approached the wall where the pistols were hang-

ing, and with trembling hands took them down. She then began leisurely to wipe off the dust, and would have made still greater delay had not a significant look from Albert obliged her to obey. She delivered the fatal arms to the servant, without being able to speak a single word, and then folding up her work retired immediately to her chamber, overcome with the most poignant grief and dreadful forebodings. Sometimes she was secretly prompted to return to her husband, throw herself at his feet, disclose every circumstance that had happened the preceding evening, and freely acknowledge her fault and apprehensions ; but she was soon convinced of the evil tendency of such measures ; she was convinced that Albert could never be persuaded to go to Werter. At length the cloth was laid for dinner, and a friend of Charlotte's who had been invited helped to keep up the conversation.

When Werter was told by his servant that Charlotte had delivered the pistols to him with her own hands he received them with ecstasy. He sat down to some bread and wine, ordered the servant to go to his dinner, and began to write.

## LETTER XCII.

DEAREST CHARLOTTE,

These pistols have been in your hands, you have wiped off the dust, you have cleaned them for me ! Then Heaven approves of my design ! Yes, from your hands, which have furnished me with these, I have long wished to receive my fate. Oh, Charlotte, ages can never obliterate the impression ; and sure I am, you cannot hate the man who passionately adores you, even in his last moments !

\* \* \* \* \*

After dinner, Werter desired his servant to pack up his trunk ; he then destroyed several papers, and went out to discharge some trifling debts in the neighbourhood. He soon returned, but notwithstanding the rain, went out again to the Count's garden, and then into the country. He came home at night, and took up his pen again.

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## LETTER XCIII.

DEAR WILLIAM,

I HAVE now taken my last view of the gardens, the fields, the mountains, and the sky ; farewell ! Comfort, as much as possible, my dear aged

mother, and Heaven will reward you. I have arranged all my affairs. We shall meet again in another and happier world.

Albert, forgive me ; forgive me for having interrupted your domestic peace. I have disturbed the tranquillity of your family, and destroyed the confidence which once subsisted between you and Charlotte, but I trust my death will remove every obstacle to your happiness. Oh, Albert ! be affectionate to Charlotte, and Heaven will bless you both.

\* \* \* \* \*

His papers now occupied his attention, several of which he destroyed, and others he sealed up and directed to his friend. These chiefly contained unconnected reflections, and the effusions of an agitated mind. At ten o'clock he ordered his fire to be made up, and a pint of wine to be brought. He then dismissed his servant.

---

## LETTER XCIV.

*Past 11 o'clock.*

Now all is silent and my mind is calm. I thank Heaven for being so vigorous and resolute in these my last moments. Oh, Charlotte, thy divine image is now before me ; I see thee on all sides.

With childish fondness I have collected every trifle which thy hands have rendered sacred. I return thee, Charlotte, thy profile, and conjure thee to esteem it, for I have imprinted on it a thousand kisses. I have written to thy father and requested him to take care of my remains. At the corner of the church-yard are two lime-trees ; there I wish to be deposited. Urge my request, I pray. Some *good* Christians, perhaps, may murmur that their bodies should hereafter lie near mine. If they object, then I must be buried near the highway, that the priest and the Levite, when they pass by my tomb, may raise their sanctified eyes and begin to pray, whilst the Samaritan will stop to shed a tear of pity.

I wish, Charlotte, to be interred in the clothes that I wear, for I have worn them in thy presence, and therefore they are dear to me. This favour I have also requested of thy father. My soul hovers over the grave. Let no one search my pockets ; I have the knot of pink ribband which you wore on your bosom the first time I saw thee surrounded by the children. Sweet souls ! I think I see them now playing round thee ; give them a thousand kisses for my sake. Ah, Charlotte ! at that first moment how was I attached to thee, never since have I been able to tear thee from this heart.

The pistols are loaded, the clock strikes twelve !

Charlotte, I am firm, my mind does not waver,  
farewell !

\* \* \* \* \*

About six in the morning, Werter's servant went into the room with a candle, he found his master extended on the floor, and weltering in blood. He ran immediately to Albert's. A sudden tremor seized Charlotte upon hearing the gate bell ring. She waked her husband, and they both arose. The servant, in tears, imparted the dreadful event. Charlotte fell senseless at her husband's feet. Albert, as soon as he had dressed himself, went to see if he could render any assistance, Alas ! all assistance was now in vain, the unfortunate youth was dead. The body, previous to his coming, had been examined by a surgeon, but, though it was warm, it retained no animation. On his bureau the book of *Emelia Galotti* was lying open.

Albert's distress, and Charlotte's melancholy situation, can be better conceived than here described. The funeral was conducted with much solemnity, but little parade. The mourning of Albert was sincere, and that of Charlotte truly sorrowful. The body was attended to the grave by the old Steward and his sons, who, with unaffected grief, regretted the loss of so worthy a man !

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Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von  
The sorrows of Werter

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